Censores Deputati :

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Imprimatur :

Fr. Laurentius Shapcote, O.P., S.T.L.

Imprimatur :

✠ Franciscus.
Archiepiscopus Westmonasteriensis.

OXFORD CONFERENCES ON PRAYER

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(MICHAELMAS TERM, 1902)

BY

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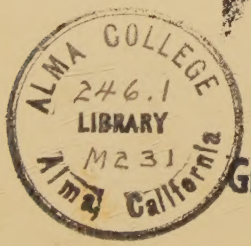

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At the Ballantyne Press

TO

MY MOTHER

FROM WHOM I FIRST LEARNED TO SAY

"OUR FATHER"

PREFACE

If any of the hearers of these Conferences ever become readers of them they may be struck or even startled by the difference between the spoken and the written word. To them especially, and, indeed, to all who may read no more of the book than its title and its preface, I take it that I owe an explanation. For in truth "Oxford Conferences" is little less, or at most but a little more, than a courtesy title, so widely apart is what I said from what my chance reader may suppose me to have said. Before delivering the Conferences I was led to foresee that a written address, were it put together with greater force and freshness than I could command, would be less able to fix the minds of the audience than words coming straight from the heart. Besides, even had I wished to write out a carefully prepared discourse, my round of

official duties would have set a bar to my wishes. Then again, rightly or wrongly, it seemed that in the case of a preaching friar, a subject of such ascetic interest as prayer should be set out with that spontaneousness which would remove it from all show or suggestion of artificiality. By choice and circumstance the Conferences were spoken extempore. And thus when they came to be written they had to grow out of the scantiest notes, aided by a not over-faithful memory.

With this explanation given in the hope of justifying the title, and of satisfying my former hearers and future readers, I willingly release my kind readers' attention from the circumstances of the book to its substance.

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OXFORD CONFERENCES ON PRAYER

I

THE NATURE OF PRAYER

THE author of the "Imitation of Christ" says: "I had rather feel compunction than know how to define it." It is his own emphatic and strenuous way of saying that a full and perfect following of Christ is less a matter of Theology than of Ascetics. Life in the meaning of the scholastics was essentially motion arising within a soul and coming to rest outside its starting-point. Christian life was action rather than contemplation, warfare rather than peace.

I have been called upon to speak to you on that most ascetic of all subjects, Prayer. I should be doing myself and you an ill-turn if at the end of the Conferences you knew what-

ever concerned Prayer, yet did not know or know better how to pray. The words I shall address to you would be vain babbling if they charged and overcharged your minds and failed to stimulate your wills. I had rather you knew how to pray than that you knew the definition of prayer. Yet because of him who speaks and you who listen it will not be within our power to keep ourselves altogether away from that philosophical appeal to principles which is the essence of Theology. One who has been brought up on Theology can hardly banish it from his thoughts and words. Nor if he could, would he feel called upon to do so in speaking to the catholic undergraduates of Oxford. For we are looking forward to your becoming in God's day the men of thought and action who are to champion catholic interests. No seeming humility will divorce you from your responsibilities. From the university of letters you will pass into the higher university of life. The lecture-hall and the library will all too soon give place to the wider platform of the world. If you are to be men of

work and worth, you must be men of principle, that is, you must not merely act upon principles, but you must know the principles upon which you act.

Now the appeal to the principles of our acts leads some men to occupy themselves with thoughts rather than deeds, with Philosophy rather than with Ethics, with Theology rather than with Ascetics; and all this to the utter emptying of the true content of a following of Jesus Christ. St. Thomas, who shall be our guide in all that we shall say, seems to have anticipated the author of the "Imitation" in warning students from a purely scientific interest in science, and above all in the science of life He writes: "In science and in whatever else is great, man finds occasion to trust in himself, and therefore not to give himself wholly to God's keeping. Hence these things are the occasion of devotion being hindered. But in the unlettered and in women devotion abounds."[1] Nevertheless scientific views, even of Ascetics, though they may stifle devotion, need not do so. And St.

[1] 2ª 2ae, Qu. 82, Art. 3 ad 3m.

Thomas lays down this principle in words that may well be weighed: "Yet if a man but subject to God his science or any other of his endowments, his devotion is but deepened thereby."[1] The botanist who knows the structure and life of tree and flower may love the fields and woods no less, but even more, than his collection. So, too, though no man can hope to be an artist without some study of anatomy, it is not felt that artists cease to admire the divine art of the human form when they have become acquainted with the divine artifice and skill of its contrivance. Nor need theologians be lukewarm, though lukewarmness may be one of their besetting sins. St. Thomas, the Prince of Doctors, wrote the *Adoro Te* and the *O Salutaris;* St. Bonaventura has earned the title of Seraphic Doctor by the tenderness of his devotion. To appeal, then, from deeds to principles is not necessarily unpractical. To show the framework of prayer may make us still more fervent in our praying. Indeed when our search for principles is at an

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, Qu. 82, Art. 3 ad 3^m.

end, and we are still found upon our knees not in research, but in praise and adoration, I know not if our prayers will be of less weight with God. Two sights are calculated to move us, and it may be to move Him deeply—the little child kneeling at its mother's knee, and the man of many years or of deep thought kneeling before God and calling Him with childlike lowliness of heart, "Our Father."

We will begin our Conferences with a rapid view of the definitions of Prayer, which we will explain by synthesis rather than by analysis. Our aim will be to put together rather than take apart — to construct rather than to examine. Our starting-point will be the existence of ourselves as a finite personality, and the existence of God as the Infinite and creative personality. To-day's[1] Gospel is in harmony with our principles by reminding us that even as each of us, for good or evil, is born into a temporal kingdom without any will of our own, so, too, for good or evil and without our will are we born into an eternal kingdom. Above Cæsar is God, and we are born

[1] Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

into the jurisdiction of both. The Gospel goes on to remind us that whilst we give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, God must have the things that are God's. We are left to ourselves to remember that whilst God is neither in the gift nor in the keeping of Cæsar, both the person and the gifts and rights of Cæsar are in the hands of Him in whom all things live, move, and have their being. It is this catholicity and omnipresence of God's person and activity that lies at the root of prayer. Three classes of men cannot pray—those who profess to know nothing, or nothing beyond the subjective phenomena of their thoughts; those who profess to know the objective phenomena that cause these thoughts, but not the objective causes of these phenomena; and lastly, those who, though rising step by step to the admission of a First Cause, refuse to hold that the course of things lies within the purview or the power of the First Cause. The Catholic takes a wider and a truer view both of himself and of God. Not only is God a person with mind and will, but with an infinite mind to foresee every turn and fortune of the world's future,

and with an all-powerful will to control the strongest as the weakest forces of the universe. To himself the Catholic is not merely a patient onlooker of his own soul; he is a spectator of all time and all existence. The findings of sense give place to the findings of reason. The realm of reason passes into the Kingdom of Faith. Phenomena are but effects and symbols of substance. Creation is an image of God. And thus man stands upon and above the earth and reaches to Heaven, for "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof: the world, and all they that dwell therein" (Ps. xxiv. 1).

The catholic soul looks at this omnipresence and catholicity of God's activity from many points of view. Most commonly, and it may even be said most naturally, the creature thinks of his Creator as the First Cause. We cannot long possess powers of reflection before the consciousness of our own existence demands the consciousness of other existences. "I am I" is soon followed by "I am not another." Yet with the consciousness that we are ourselves, we have the further consciousness, or, if you will, con-

viction, that we are not from or by ourselves. We have our own being, yet we have it of another. Where there is sequence there must be first and last. Secondary causes demand a First Cause. And thus from the conviction that we are not self-originated we rise step by step to the primal Cause. To find God out by thus tracing Him through a series of conditions and consequents is to know God by way of causality.

But our thought of God does not stop short at the idea of a primary condition who is Himself unconditioned. The very momentum of our thought obliges us to deny to Him all these imperfections and limitations which are the outcome of our conditioned creatureship. Of the creature it is truer to say that we have our being rather than that we are our being—that we have our end rather than that we are our end. Division is a necessity both in our being and in our activity. We are at once composite and changeable. But the unconditioned is undivided and immutable unity. We boldly withhold from the Maker all the limitations and imperfections of His handiwork. To conceive God as free from all that con-

fines or corrupts the creature, is to know God by way of negation.

Again, our thought of God refuses to be satisfied by a negation. Our agnostic standpoint, though true, is incomplete, and when considered complete becomes untrue. Reason boldly pushes forward and insists on holding Him not only to be the negation of all limits and all defects, but the full and perfect affirmation of all being and all perfection. God is without composition, because He is infinite. He is unchangeable, because He is eternal. To know Him thus as the eternal infinite affirmation, the A and Ω, the complete accord of full and perfect Being, is to know Him by way of perfection, or, in theological language, by way of superexcellence.

In St. Paul's analysis of the function of reason in the province of faith which he addressed to the Christians of Rome, there is a striking passage condemnatory of much of the timid agnosticism of his day: "The invisible things of Him (God) are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power also and divinity, so that they are inexcusable" (Rom. i. 20). The

brief commentary of St. Thomas shows us the depth of St. Paul's thought: "But these three points refer to the three ways of knowing God. For the invisible things of God are known by way of negation, His eternal power by way of causality, and His divinity by way of super-excellence" (*Comm. in Ep. ad Rom.*)

To these quotations from the Doctor Gentium and the Doctor Angelicus the words of an English canon, Walter Hilton, may with profit be added: "Holy Writ saith that a soul that will find God must lift her inward eye upward and seek God above itself. (But) a soul is above each bodily thing, not in place or sight, but in purity and worthiness of nature. Right so in the same manner God is above all bodily and spiritual creatures, not in place and sight, but in purity and worthiness of His unchangeable blessed nature.

"And therefore he that will wisely seek God and find Him, he must not run out with his thoughts as if he would climb above the sun and past the firmament, and imagine His majesty like to a hundred suns. But he must rather

draw down the sun and all the firmament, and forget it, and cast it beneath him where he is, and set all this and all bodily things also at nought; and then if he can think spiritually both of himself and of God also. And if he do thus, then seeth the soul above itself, then seeth it into Heaven.

"Upon this same manner shall this word within be understood. It is commonly said that a soul should see our Lord *within all things and within itself*. . . . He that will seek God within, he must first forget all bodily things, for all such things are without; and also his own body, and he must forget thinking of his own soul, and think on the uncreated nature; that is, Jesus, who made him, quickeneth him, holdeth him, and giveth him reason, memory, and love, the which is within him through His sovereign power and sublety."[1]

If these are true ideas of God, we His creatures are born into the closest relations with Him. Furthermore, since we recognise the First Cause to be the First Person—the Infinite Mind and

[1] "Scale of Perfection," Bk. ii. c. 3. pp. 205, 206.

Will—definite and most important duties rest upon us; for relations between one person and another end, even if they do not begin, in duties. Between person and person the virtue that gives each his due is Justice. The virtue whereby man gives God His due, or in other words, does his duty to God, is Religion. Of all these duties to God Who made us our first is to acknowledge that it was God and no other who made us. The first and least we can offer Him Who is so closely related to us is to acknowledge the closeness of the relations. And thus we have reached a provisional definition of Prayer, viz. an act of the virtue of religion whereby we acknowledge that God is the Maker and Mover of all things, void of all the imperfections and limitations of created things, and infinitely perfect in Being and Attributes.

The first conclusion we draw from this definition of prayer is that prayer is an act of the practical and not of merely the purely speculative reason, nor yet of the will alone. To many this will appear paradoxical; to some, perhaps, untrue. If we may trust St. Thomas,

it is the only true and accurate account of prayer. Assuredly it should not seem paradoxical to hold that from the same faculty of understanding should spring both knowledge and acknowledgment. Moreover, it is a psychological truth that it is the mind and not the will that is conscious of the emotions as well of the higher as of the lower nature. It would seem superfluous to insist that to the mind and not the will belongs the function of saying, "I know that I suffer—I know that I am happy—I know that I feel." And as it is the intellectual powers of the soul that deal with consciousness, so is it the same intellectual powers that manifest the phenomena of our consciousness in the consciousness of others. Now, manifestation as such is a practical matter requiring arrangement, and not merely that purely mental arrangement or order or relating without which no thinking can be done, but also that arrangement which needs some partnership of the will. Thus our reason has carried us on to the conclusion that if prayer is an acknowledgment or manifestation of the relation-

ship of God to us, and of us to God, it must be a work of the intellect dependent on a stimulus from the will, and as such it must be said to be a function of the practical reason. For us the purely speculative reason may be called the eye of the soul, so may the practical reason be called the tongue of the soul. By the one our relationship with God is recognised; by the other, acknowledged.

We may now go on to see how all this serves to illustrate the definitions of prayer which are commonly given by theologians. Speaking generally, these definitions take one of the three forms which correspond with the three ways of knowing God. The simplest definition is that of St. John Damascene: "Prayer is the uplifting of the mind to God.[1] When we recognise that our Maker has every perfection in its highest possible degree, we may be said to recognise that God is above us. He is the First of All Beings—the Infinite Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Power. Every effort of the

[1] Ἔκδοσις τῆς ορθόδοξου πίστεως. Bk. iii. c. 24: "προσευχή ἐστιν ἀνάβασις νοῦ πρὸς θεὸν."

Finite to recognise this or to be united with it is Prayer. The simple catechism definition borrowed from St. John Damascene still remains the sublimest expression of the mystical communion between the soul of the Creature and the Spirit of God. It covers every God-ward movement of the soul of man from the half-formed longing to believe or the feeble effort to repent, to the never-ceasing Alleluias of the Blessed. Its sublimity springs from its simple and sublime manner of viewing God, so to say, at His highest, not as the First Cause producing the Universe as His work, nor yet as a Cause unlike His work, but as the one Being necessary, the one Perfect Life, the First, the Last, infinitely surpassing the best of His creatures in the absolute unity, harmony, perfection of His existence.

A further definition comes to us from St. Thomas: "Prayer is the voice of desire." [1] This view of prayer springs from our knowledge of God by way of negation. One of the earliest truths forced upon the mind of the finite is

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, Qu. 83, Art. 1, 1^m—"desiderii interpres."

the fact of its limitations and still more of its imperfections. Not only is it not another, but the perfections of other beings are wanting to it. To speak of our own division of creation, man must yield to the hound in swiftness of speed, to the hawk in keenness of gaze, to the lion in strength, to the angel in breadth and depth of intelligence. The creatures' individuality is limitation, whereas the individuality of God is absolute limitlessness. We are ourselves because other beings set bounds to us; He is Himself because He is without bounds. Amongst the earliest truths that come to us is the humbling fact of how little we are and how much we can never be. A still more humbling, if not an earlier, truth than the greatness of our limitations is the greatness of our imperfections. To be conscious how little we are, however galling it may be to our pride, is less painful than the bitter consciousness of how much we might have been or might still be. History cannot recall when "to know oneself" came to be accounted the beginning of wisdom. Yet to know ourselves is only to

be acutely conscious of the iron limitations forged upon us by Nature, and of the more irksome imperfections wrought upon us by our own will. Self-knowledge is, in truth, the first step towards wisdom; yet it takes us but a little way, and takes us into darkness. To know God is the second and better truth that leads us into light. Frail, weak, little, and wretched that we are, when we come to recognise how void is God of all the narrowness and shortcoming of our being, it is as if some window were opened in our soul from whence we may catch a distant sight of the eternal hills. At such a sight how few are the souls that do not take heart, that cannot reach out to hope, that cannot learn the divine art of desire, that cannot master the divine secret of *sursum corda!* To interpret this inward desire and hope is to pray. Thus in the simple words of St. Thomas, "Prayer is the voice of desire."

Another and perhaps a more widely recognisable definition of prayer is again afforded us by St. John Damascene: "Prayer is an asking God for our needs;" or in the words of St. Thomas,

"Prayer is an asking God for our wants."[1] To reach God in thought as the crown of all existence is to be very near the springs of hope, as we have seen. Even if nature re-echoes no *sursum corda*, God does. When the soul has found hope, it has found the chief spring of action. *To hope* must ever go before *to do*, just as *I will* must ever wait upon *I wish*. Furthermore, faith and hope are brought into being only to pass away at their work's close. Hope must give place to action, and desire yield to resolution. Since we cannot rise above ourselves unless we have help from above, prayer quickly changes from the melody of hope to the melody of petition, from the mood of mere emotion to the strong cry of a soul yearning heavenwards and calling for help upon Him who is not only the first and most perfect one and the source of all being, but the gracious spring of all wellbeing unto the end of time.

Prayer is thus a practical recognition of God as the Supreme Being—the Perfect One—the First Cause, not merely of our being with its

[1] *Ut sup.* "προσευχή ἐστιν . . . ἡ αἴτησις τῶν προσηκόντων παρὰ Θεοῦ." § 2^{a} 2^{ae}, Qu. 83, Art. 3, Obj. 2—"volitorum petitio."

limitations, but of our redemption with its remedy for our imperfections and its strong helping-hand to new and eternal destinies. There is little need to say more to show how prayer must become as it were the breath of our soul. Essentially a work of the practical reason, brought out under the fervour of a will warmed by divine love, prayer may well be called the master-art. To quote the words of Walter Hilton: "Thou wilt say that I speak too high on this matter of prayer, which is indeed no *mastery* nor difficulty for me to write, but it were a great *mastery* for a man to practise it."[1] It was in order to learn many things that we came up to this famous university, where all things are taught. The many things we would learn, God grant us strength to master. Above all else may God grant us strength and grace to go down to life's work masters in the master-art of childlike prayer.

[1] "The Scale of Perfection," p. 37.

II

THE DIVISIONS OF PRAYER

Prayer being the uplifting of the mind to God, there will be as many kinds of prayer as there are modes of raising the human soul to contact with the soul of God. To set down all these many kinds of prayer would lead us into by-paths, where we should be tempted far beyond the limits of our time and duty. Yet we must make some incursion into the divisions of prayer, if only to take the widest possible view of that simple and withal sublime converse which the finite dares to hold with the Infinite. To make the matter as free as may be from all needless confusion we purpose treating of a fourfold division of Prayer, viz. the Prayer of simple Wonderment or Reverence, the Prayer of Praise, the Prayer of Thanksgiving, and the Prayer of Petition. Two well-marked phenomena are traceable throughout this division, of no small

interest to those who delight to conceive the divine mind, working even in its most supernatural effects through that orderly process which we call Law. Those of us who hold that the idea of Law, whether in the natural or supernatural kingdoms, is the crowning revelation of God, will surely see with delight the Law of Nature supplemented with the Law of Over-nature, even in the mystic region of prayer. It is a principle of empiric psychology that the more complex the object the more complex the act. If we take as our working definition of vital functions "the adjustment of internal to external relations," it is evident that the more multiplied and co-ordinated these external relations become, the more multiplied and co-ordinated become the internal relations. If would transfer this principle to emotional functions, we should say that the more complex the object presented by the cognoscitive to the appetitive faculties, the more complex is the emotion arising out of its presentation. To trace this natural law throughout the supernatural ways of prayer may not be one of the least rewards of the subject we have now in hand.

Before the soul rises up to God in prayer it must have brought Him down to itself in thought. Prayer springs from the concept or concepts of God which man's intelligence forms out of the data of its internal or external consciousness. Thus the simpler the concept under which we conceive the Infinite the simpler will be the resultant emotion and the corresponding prayer. What we have said or have implied leads us to begin our divisions of prayer with the prayer of wonder or reverence, which to some may well appear an unusual and even an untrue division. Yet it is not untrue even if it is unusual. The analysis of our minds and the authority of the sacred writings, as well as the history of holy men and women, make its existence undeniable. This may easily be seen by reflecting that God is first presented to our emotions as the Infinite One, the Being whose greatness overshadows us. Between the creature and the Creator two ladders are ever stretching—whereby we mount up to the knowledge of the First Cause, only to find Him linked to us His handiwork by the self-imposed fetters of a

thousand subtle relations. True as it is to say that the way of causality leads us first to the knowledge of God, it is no less true to say that it is God in His greatness, in His infinity, that first sets light to our emotions. No less observant a thinker than Aristotle has laid it down that wonder is the beginning of philosophy, so that the philosopher, the lover of wisdom, is the lover of mystery.[1] With equal truth may it be said that wonder is the beginning of prayer, and that whether here on earth or hereafter in heaven it will remain the simplest of the creature's prayers. One of our poets with a fine observance of his feelings has written—

> "My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky."

When the greatness of God suddenly opens out to us streaming in upon our souls from every quarter of the universe; when we see Him in the simplest flower or the richest sunset, and hear Him in the quiet music of a hidden brook or in the full pealing of His thunder; when from

[1] "Metaphysics," A. 1, 982, 6, 12: "*διὰ γὰρ τὸ θαυμάζειν οἱ ἄνθροποι καὶ νῦν καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἤρξαντο φιλοσοφεῖν . . . διὸ καὶ ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλοσοφός πώς ἐστιν.*"

the depths of our nothingness we look up to the everlasting hills of His greatness, and from the same depths we cry to Him in simple wonder at the greatness of His kingdom and of His being, our soul is stirred with the prayer of wonderment, the first and simplest homage that the finite yields to the majesty of the Infinite.

The pages of Holy Scripture are full of this form of prayer. In the Book of Psalms it abounds. All God's works, whether of nature or grace, suffice to raise the delicately-swung souls of Judah's psalmists to the great God. The thought of Jehovah's mystic presence under the tents of Judah inspires the psalmist to break forth: "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (Ps. lxxxiii. 1). Still more does the greatness of God's own being stimulate the soul to wonder: "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. . . . They shall speak of the magnificence of the glory of Thy holiness, and shall tell Thy wondrous works" (Ps. cxliv. 3, 5). So, too, the phenomena of nature, whether great or

beautiful, enkindle the psalmist's soul to fervent emotions: "Wonderful are the surges of the sea! Wonderful is the Lord on high" (Ps. xcii. 4). Nothing could better express this childlike wonderment of the Jewish soul than the singularly beautiful Psalm beginning, "O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth," and continuing—

"For Thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens. . . .

"For I will behold Thy heavens, the works of Thy fingers: the moon and the stars which Thou hast founded. . . .

"O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in all the earth" (Ps. viii.).

That this prayer of wonderment has its place in heaven who can doubt, when we think of the great prince of the heavenly host, Michael, whose name, "who is like God!" seems to bid us hearken to the cries of wonder and reverence, rising up before the throne of the Most High? And though there is a sense in which our Blessed Lord with His divine and beatific knowledge could find nothing unforeseen and nothing won-

derful, yet He Who marvelled at the faith of the Centurion, seems to have expressed in the simple phrase "Our Father!" all that childlike wonder which is the first purely intellectual emotion, and the first spontaneous prayer of the soul.

Wonder and reverence though so closely allied as practically to form but one kind of prayer, are yet distinct as mere emotions. Mere greatness, and especially greatness of power, enkindles wonder. Now there is the greatness of lifeless and impersonal beings, and the greatness of persons, and whilst we wonder at lifeless force or greatness, we reverence persons—we marvel at Nature and reverence the God of Nature.

Nothing is more often dwelt upon in the sacred writings than that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We should put the same truth in other words, were we to say that reverence or the emotion of wonder and fear stimulated by the knowledge of a Person of infinite greatness is the beginning of all true religion as well as the first step in the path of true prayer.

From the prayer of wonder and reverence,

the soul that is energised by grace quickly passes to the prayer of praise and honour. Acting under the law of correspondence between object and function, the emotion of praise and honour being more complex and more reflexive than that of simple wonder betokens a more complex object, and *vice versâ*. Thus we may argue from the object to the act, or backwards from the act to the object. In the case of wonder it is the unwontedness and still more the greatness of the object and most of all the greatness of a personal being that affords the objective stimulus. But the subject cannot rest in the dim apprehension of personal greatness. Wonder is quickly succeeded by curiosity. The knowledge of the whole, as a whole, needs to be filled in by the knowledge of the parts of the whole. From the general apprehension of personal greatness, the mind passes on to consider that greatness as possessed by a personal mind and a personal will, until at length the mind and will of the subject are stimulated, not merely by the existence, but even more by the greatness of a personal knowledge and personal goodness. Thus we do not

praise beings that have no mind—we do not praise the rose for its scent, woodbine for its beauty, balsam for its power to soothe and heal. Nor do we honour beings that have powers of knowing unless they have such powers of willing as to make them good and the makers of their own goodness. Hence whilst it is merely the greatness of God that enkindles the soul to wonder and to revere, it is the greatness of God's knowledge or skill, and above all the greatness of God's unfathomable goodness that draws from the soul the further notes of praise and honour. These emotions are more complex than that of wonder, as resting on a more complete knowledge, as well as being blended from many more thoughts and feelings. Moreover, they last long after the thrills of wonder have quieted down to the even rhythm of reverence. Lastly, the spontaneity which is such a characteristic and such a charm of naïve wonder gives place to more reflexive functions. The greatness which overcame and, so to say, stunned the mind and will is analysed. It is not mere power that moves the soul, but power of thought and affection—skill in shaping means to an end, love

that still seeks the end throughout the employment of the means. Not merely is the soul struck to its depths as in wonder, but it is made resonant of praise and honour in the whole breadth of its powers.

Scripture, and above all the liturgical books of Scripture, are full of this prayer of praise. Whatever grievous national faults may be laid to the charge of the Jewish people, they cannot be accused of lukewarmness in praising Jehovah Who led them from bondage into freedom. Everything raised their minds to God. They praised Him not merely in the sun and moon, but in every shower and in the gentle dropping of the dew; not only in the great fishes of the sea, but in the frailest fowls of the air; not only in the heat that brought them food and life, but in the ice and snow, in the frost and cold; not only in the bright Palestinian sunshine that ripened the harvest of their vineyards, but in the clouds and lightnings that beat down their vines and brought hunger into their homes; not merely in the good days when things went well with them, and Jehovah's

smile rested on them, but in the night of trial, of exile, when they sate, hungry and sick of heart, beside the great river of Babylon and mingled their tears with the flood; not merely in every good thing, but in every evil and bitter thing, for was not He the great Lord of Hosts who alone could boast, "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil" (Isaias xlv. 5, 7). The steadfastness and intensity of their faith often raised their emotions and their psalms to a pitch of the highest sublimity. It mattered little whether they were gathered together on Mount Sion to keep a national festival or to grieve over a national disaster, the present joy or sorrow led them always to think of Jehovah with joy, to praise Him in His holy places and in the firmament of His power, for His mighty acts and for the multitude of His greatness, and to praise Him with sound of trumpet, with psaltery and harp, with every power and spirit that God had given them, and with every divine condescension whereby in past times

God had visited, redeemed, and consoled His people.

Another book of the New Testament gives us a glimpse of the liturgy that will adorn the New Sion. The beloved disciple has described the magnificent ceremonial of the divine throne-room in words that must be set down as he wrote them: "After these things I heard as it were the voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power is to our God. . . . And the four and twenty ancients and the four living creatures fell down and adored God that sitteth upon the throne, saying, Amen! Alleluia! And a voice came out of the throne, saying, 'Give praise to our God, all ye His servants; and you that fear Him, little and great.'

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunders, saying, Alleluia! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, hath reigned. Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to Him" (Apoc. xix. 1–6). The splendid praise of the Church Triumphant

has had its influence with the Church Militant, in the daily Office of Lauds, which at daybreak, when the earth is coming into sight, calls upon the whole universe of lifeless and living things to bless and praise the Lord. Still more has the *laus perennis* of the divine court inspired the never-ceasing liturgical and official praise which rises up from the lips of all those who stand at or beside the Altar of God, vowed to that altar by the self-sacrifice of priestly or religious life.

The prayer of thanksgiving quickly follows upon the prayer of wonder and praise. The greatness of God's goodness is seen to mean the greatness of His goodness to us. God is "My God." We recognise the force of the psalmist's simple exclamation, "O Lord, *my* Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth" (Ps. viii.) The goodness of God comes home to us. He is seen to love not merely the world as a whole, but to love me, who am such a trivial part of the whole. No one had grasped this personal relation between human misery and divine mercy more firmly than St. Paul, whose

conversion was a miraculous mercy of God. His own energetic words put the matter with clearness and force: "Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners, of whom *I* am the chief. But for this cause have I obtained mercy, that in *me* first Christ Jesus might shew forth all patience" (1 Tim. i. 15, 16). The relations between the First Cause and His Universe are not merely to the universe in general, but to each part of it, and still more to each individual soul. On the side of the finite, its relation to the Infinite, springing as it does from the art of creation whereby it came into being, is as vital to it as its being. Nay, this transcendental relation of the creature to its Creator has been held by some philosophers to be identical with, and as real as, its being. Moreover, God's side of the relationship, if we may so speak, though not equally real, is equally true, so that in giving us our being God has condescended to enter into true personal relations with us which can never cease to be until we ourselves cease to be. To acknowledge to God the existence of this real

personal relationship of dependence upon Him for our being is the essence of the prayer of thanksgiving. Few words need be spent in showing how as a function of mind and will it adds something more to the complexity and reflexiveness of simple wonder and simple praise. Moreover, its object is more complex. It is no longer God as simply great, or great in goodness, but God as a Being whose goodness has been and still is necessary for our being. I do not mean that our gratitude should be confined to those creative acts whereby we have our being, even when it is centred upon them. Yet whilst thanking God for all that befalls us either in the world of Nature or in the over-world of Grace, mere thanksgiving limiting us, as it does, to the past and shutting out the future must of necessity find its supreme expression in recognising the boons of Creation and Redemption, whereby our being is given its place in the natural and supernatural kingdoms.

It would be an easy task to find Scripture warrant for this form of prayer. Not to speak of the many thank-offerings made to Jehovah by

His Jewish people under the Old Dispensation, the New Dispensation is especially worthy and full of thanksgiving. On three most solemn and significant occasions Our Blessed Lord gave thanks to His heavenly Father with almost liturgical formality, once before the miraculous multiplication of the five barley loaves and the two fishes, and again before the crowning miracle of raising Lazarus to life. These two miracles, so significant of His power to give and to multiply life, were no doubt intended to be foretypes of that further and better thanksgiving which accompanied the consecration and multiplication of His Body and Blood at the Last Supper. In the minds of the early Christian so full of the memory of that parting meal, the connexion between the idea of thanksgiving and sacrifice became so close that the "giving of thanks" seemingly began to be used to mean the Adorable Sacrifice of the Mass. This touching custom has left its traces with us to this day. We bear witness to it each time we call the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar the Eucharist or thank-offering. Moreover, it may well be that in speaking of the centre of all our

sacrifice and all our religion as the thank-offering, we are recalling not merely the example of Our Lord but His teaching. Gratitude in its most winning form was a characteristic of the human heart of Our Lord. He could not forbear endeavouring to plant that virtue in the hearts of His apostles. In the model prayer He gave them, the simple exclamation, "Our Father!" taught them and still teaches us the daily duty of likening our relations with God to those of a child to its father, who spends his life for his little ones in the one hope of earning their thanks in the day they first recognise his many self-sacrifices.

By gradual steps the prayer of thanksgiving passes into the prayer of petition. In a sense, gratitude is an almost irresistible petition. To show a grateful heart is a necessary, and perhaps the best, part of intercessory prayer. Petition, though so closely consequent upon thanksgiving, is yet distinguished from it, through the addition which it makes of a more complex object and a more complex and reflexive function of mind and will. Over and beyond the recognition of God

as great in being or in person—as great in knowledge and in goodness, as great in His past goodness to us—we must go on to recognise Him as the source of all our goodness to come. Not merely do we owe our natural and supernatural being to Him, but it is He alone from whom our future natural and supernatural wellbeing must come. The past He has given without our asking, only to make us confident in laying the future before Him, which will be given only at our asking. He has endowed us with freewill, whereby we are masters of the future; but He alone can guide and safeguard our freewill lest we may be slaves in the future. We must not practically and still less professedly join the ranks of many subtle thinkers to whom God is the Maker of the world, but a wicked or a weak Maker, who, like an idle or heartless parent, brings his child into being only to cast it out to the play of blind chance.

Lex credendi est lex orandi. To pray aright we must have right notions of God. He must be held to be the One in whom we not only have our being, but in whom and by whom alone we

live and move, in whom and by whom we guide our lives in a path that ever mounts to the perfect life. To acknowledge God to be the guide and stay of our future—to look to Him for our daily bread of body and soul is to employ that most human of all prayers—Petition.

For reasons such as these, and for others truer and deeper than these, Our Blessed Lord has left us a model of petition rather than of any other form of prayer. He who did all things well must have acted as He did with and to some purpose. The needs of His own time and of all time lay open to Him. He saw where men failed most, and where they would stand in greatest need of example and encouragement until the end of time. It may well be that when time has given place to eternity, the cry of petition will be changed into songs of thanksgiving and hymns of praise—the murmurs of "Christe exaudi nos" into the full chorus of "Deo Gratias" and "Alleluia"! Meanwhile, for us who still find a resting-place in the valley of our responsibilities, our trials, and perhaps our tears, no attitude towards God befits us better than childlike petition. Seldom has

faith been called upon to stand firm against more angry storms than those that are still raging about us. Merely to kneel down in daily reverence and ask our Father who is in Heaven for daily bread is daily to renew our strength within us, is daily to bring forth from our soul the subtlest function of its highest nature, is daily to feed our faith upon God the eternal mind, is daily to perfect our trust and love towards Him who is the Giver of all good things, past or to come.

III

THE THEOLOGY OF PRAYER

When confronted with the explanation of prayer, which the masters of prayers are wont to give, the mind naturally detects certain obscurities or difficulties in their explanations. These difficulties we will set ourselves to remove. Whilst making no complete justification for our choice of a title, we will endeavour to reassure the mind in face of these difficulties by treating of what we shall name the Theology of Prayer.

An active mind, to which the current explanations of prayer are presented, will instinctively reason after this fashion: "Prayer is a presentation of human needs and human emotions to Almighty God, who, as theology assures us, is a Being of infinite insight and knowledge. To pray to God is to open out our soul before Him—to lift up our inward being to His gaze. Yet, surely, theology would have us believe the

innermost workings of our mind are always present to His gaze, the most secret emotions of our soul always bare to His omniscience. St. Paul says that 'we use persuasion to men, but to God we are manifest' (2 Cor. v.). To present information to omniscience is superfluous. Yet to deny omniscience to the First Cause is irrational, and even blasphemous. Of the two it is safer to hold that prayer is a superfluity than that omniscience is an impossibility. But in allowing God to remain, we have proved prayer to be a waste product of perfervid imaginations."

To answer these reasonings of the partly informed and partly misinformed mind, the theology, or, if we may be allowed the word, the economy of prayer must be kept patiently in view.

In the preceding Conferences we have dealt most with God in His inward being, and His outward relations. From Him we must turn to our own selves, trusting that the view we have opened up of the divine relations may make our self-inspection easier and more fruitful. Our first fact is, that though by some

ingredients of our being we belong to the inorganic kingdom, our consciousness witnesses to our possession of life. Whether or not such witness is speculatively justifiable, it is practically irresistible. To be conscious, and especially to be self-conscious, is to be the subject of the highest function of organic existence. This life is manifested by activity. In scholastic language Life is spontaneous movement; and as motion cannot be conceived without a starting-point as well as terminus, our conception of Life becomes that of a spontaneous approach to a term or end.

It is quite useless to defend this necessarily theological conception of life. We are powerless to interpret Life save in terms of movement, and we are equally powerless to conceive of movement save to or from a terminus. What concerns us most is to set down the various opinions about the nature of that end as it regards the freewill of man. Ethical writers, dealing with the subject of man's end or term, may be classed under three heads, corresponding to the three main tendencies of human

activity. There is the positivist tendency, which, of course, we do not necessarily identify with the historic possessors of the name; there is the metaphysical, or purely ideal tendency; and there is the theological tendency. The positivist philosopher, with his purely natural and physical view of life, must consistently give a utilitarian or hedonistic account of man's end. The end of existence is pleasurable existence. No one willingly keeps pain before his consciousness. Now, though this account of man is true up to a point, and, indeed, as far as it goes, it becomes untrue because it fails to go further. It is false not in what it says, but in what it fails to say. It takes man at his lowest, and describes him with painstaking accuracy. But there is a highest as well as a lowest in man; and the positive or physical concept of man will say nothing, or has nothing to say, of what is highest and best. Its view is a half-truth, and consequently half untrue.

The metaphysical view of man fails from a like principle, though in another application. The naturalist will see only what is lowest in

man, the metaphysician only what is highest. To the positivist man is a little higher than animal; to the idealist, he is only a little less than angel. To the positivist man is a being whose looks and aim are turned towards the earth from which he has emerged; to the idealist man is a being with looks and aim turned towards the heaven whither he makes his way. Pleasure and usefulness are the earthly aim of the naturalist, truth and beauty for their own sakes are the noble ambitions of the idealist. Though so widely apart in their purposes, both the physical and the metaphysical views of life are barren, because partial. Every purely practical or purely ideal account of man must ever be fragmentary and unfruitful. A merely monistic view of what we are, whether it describe the best or worst of us, and no matter how well it does its task, is doomed to sterility. Naturalism and Idealism are fruitful only in promises and criticism; and though they come to us with fair words and a show of argument, their hands are empty.

It is otherwise with the theological view of

life. The Church, the guardian of this view, says to the soul: "You came from God's hands, though your body is of the earth, and it is to God you must return. Your present end is not pure pleasure nor pure truth, but duty. You are in the keeping of a greater than you. Your aim is not merely an end, but a destiny. Your vocation upon this earth is a *sursum corda* to something beyond the earth. To every one the invitation, nay, the command, comes, 'Friend, go up higher.' And though you cannot see how the earthly is to put off its corruption, nor how the eternal hills are to be scaled, He who has sent the message will send the means. Trust in Him. Beseech Him. Your destiny only awaits your consent to His grace and your acknowledgment of His mercy." In other words, our duty here below is to be perfect. In the beginning of God's supernatural dealings with the chosen people, God said to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God: walk before me and be perfect." The command, though imperative, was humanly impossible. "And Abraham fell flat on his face" (Gen. xvii. 1, 3.) Once again, under the new and

better dispensation Omnipotence lays the same command upon the finite. The Sermon on the Mount, with its clear and full statement of Christian principles, repeats the divine command: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 48). Thus the divine formula "Thou shalt" makes perfection the duty and end of life.

Here, at least in supernatural matters, we have the law of Progress, which men have tried to identify with the essential law of Being. Whether with success or failure men have tried to show that cosmic movement, whether spontaneous or derivative, must ever be progress—though there are not wanting those to whom entropy and degradation are the only laws of life. Assuredly the cosmic generalisation that only the fit shall survive cannot be made to signify that only the ideally best are the practically fit. But in the over-world of spiritual beings and functions, progress, if not indeed a law, is at least a privilege, and a duty. Entropy is certainly not the law of the spiritual life. The soul need not rise to higher things, nor need it sink to lower things;

yet it cannot indeed stand still. It must move —forward and backward. If it would keep itself from entropy, if it would avoid the lowest and worst, it must keep moving onward towards what is highest and best. The theology of this spiritual evolution has nowhere received more accurate treatment than in St. Paul's letter to the neophytes of Philippi. He says: "Not as though I had already attained or were already perfect. . . . Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended. But one thing I do; forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus." Then, holding himself out as a model, he adds, "Let us therefore as many as are perfect, be thus minded."[1]

There is just one condition necessary for this possibility and duty of progress. It is a correspondence with the environment. But in supernatural matters God is the chief environment. The supernal vocation, the divine call, the message

[1] Phil. iii. 12–15.

from on high to mount upwards finds or casts man on his face. "Abraham fell flat on his face.' God alone can give the motive power to rise. If our conversation, *i.e.* our life, is to be in heaven, we must look for the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, "Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like the body of His glory, according to the operation whereby also He is able to subdue all things to Himself."[1] The creative, or at least the re-creative power of God must raise us to our feet, and we "must stand fast in the Lord."[2] To recognise and still more to acknowledge this dependence on God for our supernatural motive power is to take away the force of the objection that God does not need to hear our prayers. Prayer would indeed be an absurdity were it supposed to be a contrivance for conveying information to omniscience. But prayer is seen to be a necessity as soon as it recognised that without God we can do nothing to rise above ourselves by fulfilling the supernal vocation of perfection. It is not so much God who stands in need of being asked, as we who stand in need of

[1] Phil. iii. 21. [2] Ibid. iv. 1.

asking. He knows our needs, but He knows that we need nothing more than prayer. He is ever ready to grant if we will ask, but He requires to be asked. From him alone all good and especially all supernatural good must come, but on the condition that we recognise from whom it comes. To borrow the words of St. Thomas: "It is necessary to pray to God, not indeed to make known to Him our needs and wants, but in order that we ourselves may bear in mind that in matters of this kind, we must seek the divine help."[1] And again, God "wills to grant things on our asking, for our benefit, viz. that we may acquire a certain trustfulness in having recourse to Him, and that we may recognise Him to be the author of all our good."[2] Nor must it be urged that this view of prayer makes it necessary only to the creature, and in no way necessary to the Creator. Never is the human understanding more impotent than when trying to measure what is possible, impossible, or necessary to God. Nothing, it is true, is absolutely necessary to omnipotence. But if by a divine condescension

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, Qu. 83, Art. 2. ad 1^m.

[2] Ibid. ad 3^m.

Omnipotence has proposed an end to Himself, He also condescends to accept the burden of certain means to the end. The First Cause is said to stand in need of the secondary causes *if* He desires the actions or functions of secondary causes. For the act of vision an eye is necessary. And though prayer does not seem necessary to this same degree, it may be doubted whether on the supposition that human energy is to be raised to a superhuman act and aim, a recognition of this is not a necessary antecedent or outcome. Lucifer was cast down by the law of Entropy—not for aspiring to be perfect as his Heavenly Father was perfect, but for refusing to recognise from whose hands came the motive power of that ascension. Every man receives the call to go higher. They alone can answer it who recognise from whom it came, and by whose divine strength it may be answered.

This first objection does not take us to the root of the difficulty. When we have shown that prayer is not superfluous we have still to answer those who hold that prayer is impossible. They may be supposed to state their difficulty

after this fashion: "The objector you have met and answered failed to make his point good, because he did not go to the root of the matter. He did not attack as boldly as he might. He should have left the superfluousness of prayer and attacked its possibility. Men of course have ever been and perhaps will ever be superstitious enough to look on high for help when they cannot, or think they cannot, help themselves. Their superstition springs from their ignorance. They do not know or they will not keep in mind that if there is no God prayer is an absurdity, and if there is a God prayer is an impossibility. For if there is Nature and no God of Nature we have no one to free us from the unchanging grip of physical Law; and if there are both God and Nature there is no one to rescue us from the unchanging will of Omnipotence. Those who pray to a God imagine they may bring about a change in the unchangeable—an act of repentance in the impeccable—a confession of ignorance in the omniscient—a defeat of the irresistible. From eternity God knows and wills all that is to be.

To change the divine will would be to destroy the divinity of it. A God whose will could be changed by any human interference or representation would be as impotent as the creature that changed Him. The course of things is foreordered and foredoomed. All that is lies either under the iron yoke of Law or the irresistible and eternal Fiat of the Divine Will. In either case prayer is not only a superfluity but an impossibility. For as it is impossible for any human will to change the course of things, so should it be alike impossible for the mind of man to expect and still more to ask for such a change."

We may imagine these to be the words in which such an objection would be framed. It is not to be expected that we should make light of the difficulty. But we will seek to show that it is only a difficulty clad in that darkness which is the common covering of all that is final in things and thoughts. We shall not pretend to throw a clear light on what must remain for the term of life's piligrimage the essential trial of human understanding. But we shall hope to show that

it is a trial, laid upon us by Him who has made the world so bitter-sweet, so darkly-light with the fatherly aim of training our minds and hearts. We shall not deal very definitely nor, so to say, grapple very closely with the difficulty, yet we hope to show how the difficulty may be outflanked even by those who see the folly of seeking to meet it face to face.

Our first endeavour will be to allay the soul's distress by assuring it that the difficulties from God's foreknowledge and foreordinance are neither peculiar nor indeed essentially relevant to the subject of prayer. They are more especially directed to the subject of freewill. The certainty of foreknowledge and forewill is a kind of determinism which cuts the ground from prayer only by previously cutting the ground from freewill. Indetermination, or what is known in scholastic philosophy as indifference, is the essential quality of freedom. Any form of determinism, no matter from what source it springs, seems to be the very bane of freedom. Thus the objection we have drawn from God's foreknowledge and forewill strike at prayer

through freedom. Such of us as are inwardly convinced of our freewill have already mastered the difficulties raised by the objection. That they should start up again in the matter of our prayers is due to the weakness or strength of our imagination rather than to the strength of our reasons. We must then fight and overcome these difficulties on their own plane. We must close upon them in the sphere of freedom rather than in the department of a special act of freedom such as prayer.

Yet one consideration may serve to still the doubts which arise naturally from the thoughts of God's supremacy and man's freedom. At first sight it sometimes seems to the puzzled mind that belief in a personal God complicates the scheme of things. In this frame of mind we are prompted to say within ourselves that the existence of God is the real difficulty, as if the abrogation of the Infinite would be an end to all mystery and an answer to all perplexities. But to remove God is not to banish difficulties. On the contrary, it is to increase them. The Infinite is so necessary a postulate of thought

that the world of thought, as of being, could not go on without Him. To put it paradoxically were there no God it would be necessary to create Him. In the subject-matter of Free-will, it is not God Who makes the difficulty; it is determinism. And whether there is a God or not, there must be determinism. Only if it is not the determinism of a free, intellectual, and infinitely loving person, it is the necessary, blind, relentless, if not cruel, determinism of nature and natural law. God, and especially God made man and dying for men, is a conception which takes the sting from that determinism which freedom inevitably encounters. When philosophical schemes are under judgment it is not this or that fact that must be contrasted. Scheme must be set against scheme. It is vain to leave dualism for monism; the difficulties we would escape start up afresh. Vain also would it be to give up our thoughts of dualism or monism for agnosticism. To fly to any form of absolute or partial scepticism is to empty the world not merely of all mystery, but of all meaning. The most simple-minded

of us are philosophers enough to make a comparison of scheme with scheme, though we may not be logicians enough to set down the philosophy of our scheme. We choose a side both in ethics and in philosophy with good reason, though we may be unable to give our reasons. And when the difficulties of our scheme come before us we must console and strengthen ourselves with the thought that they are but difficulties. All beings cast a shadow; and the greater the being the greater the shadow. A God without mystery would be a God without claim to our reverence. Thoughts like these will lead us to reassure our mind when the stress of difficulty confronts us. We shall act like a loyal subject whose reply to a rebel's insinuating arguments is to raise a menacing rifle. Even if we are not deeply enough versed in the most difficult subject of Providence, we are skilled enough to know that all our difficulties have an answer, though we may not know what that answer is. Thus we hold ourselves in check by our reason anticipating difficulties, and by recognising that the scheme

of things which has become the life of our life and soul of our soul has only less difficulties than those other schemes which promise so much and fulfil so little.

The answer to the difficulty we cannot express in better terms than those of St. Thomas, who has so fearlessly explored and no less fearlessly expressed all the momentous questions that arise from the recognition of infinite knowledge and infinite will, which is infinite love. Before giving his words it is well to remind ourselves that in these abstruse matters the logician seems to have the advantage of the philosopher. Mysteries by their very nature are far removed from our thoughts, and are doubly far removed from the words in which we veil rather than clothe those thoughts. Verbal expressions of the mysterious are often verbal contradictions. All the while that the mind is employing verbal signs, it is engaged in correcting them in an inaudible monologue which words would fail to express. But the logician is a master of signs. His is the art of words, and may be nothing more unless Philosophy is

ever near at hand to guide and strengthen it. In the quick thrust and parry of controversy it is Logic that makes the best show, whilst Philosophy can say but little, having too much to say and scarce knowing where to make a beginning. Hence, in grappling at closer quarters with our objection, we must keep a firm hand on the restlessness of an active and impatient Logic. We must view things as a whole by putting up with the difficulties of the parts until we see the whole. St. Thomas answers our objection by rapidly sketching the scheme of things, and thereby suggesting that we should take a broad philosophical view of the matter and not confuse ourselves with the intricate and seemingly contradictory movements of the several parts. His words are as follow: "Providence, of which predestination is a part, does not destroy secondary causes. On the contrary, it brings effects about in such a way that the order of secondary cause is also subject to Providence. Hence even as natural effects are provided in such a way that natural causes, without which these natural effects could not

exist, are provided for these natural effects, so likewise a man's salvation is predestined in such a way that there falls under the order of predestination whatever promotes man's salvation—whether it be his own prayers or those of others, good works or whatever else is necessary for salvation. Hence the predestined must give their mind to work and prayer, since it is by these that the effect of predestination is fulfilled with certainty. According to 2 Peter i. 10, 'Labour the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election.'"[1]

With true philosophical instinct St. Thomas solves the difficulty by the broad theory of causality. The theism of the Catholic Church conceives of God as a First Cause, who not merely transcends all creation, but is immanent in all creatures, yet immanent with such divine perfection that He takes away not one jot nor tittle of their being or of their activity. Necessary, or, in St. Thomas' words, natural causes act naturally: free causes act freely. All causes,

[1] 1ª, Qu. 23, Art. 8.

whether necessary or free, are really and not nominally causes. They are not mere occasions for divine interference. He is the First Cause, not because He is the First of an impotent hierarchy of mere occasions, but because He is the First of a potent series of effective and efficient Causes. Every blow that would lay the axe to the root of prayer, and consequently of free agency, would equally destroy all causality; and whilst we banished the need of prayer, we should banish the whole universe of causes, leaving in it an immanent and perhaps pantheistic Agent working His own absolute will through a cosmos of impotent puppets.

The reason why the difficulty we have raised weighs so heavily upon us may perhaps be accounted for by an analysis of our self-knowledge. We may begin our self-examination from one of two starting-points. We may begin from without and work home to ourselves; or we may begin from within and work out from the ego to the non-ego. To look out into the Universe is to be confronted by the omnipresence and omnipotence of Law. To look into ourselves is

to be conscious of a spontaneity which can defy Law, by being a law unto itself. If, then, we begin from without, and arrive at ourselves as a stray phenomenon in a world of law, we can only end by setting ourselves under the iron heel of determinism, in which all prayer and, indeed, all effort is superfluous and absurd. Whereas, if we make self our starting-point, as we must make it, no mere reasoning from a non-ego can destroy our consciousness of spontaneity and freedom, Thus, whatsoever merely human philosophy a man takes up, there must ever remain some antagonism, or at least some estrangement between his ethics and his metaphysics. Yet the nobility of our Life consists in the recognition of our Freedom. They alone recognise it completely who recognise it theoretically and practically, and they alone may be fully said to recognise it theoretically who employ it practically. Our first, and it may be our noblest, employment of it is to recognise it in face of the difficulties that surround it. When, then, we are urged by the aggressiveness of our environment to deny ourselves by starting

from without and making our way home to an absolutely determined ego, our freewill must exert itself to reverse this process. The consciousness of spontaneity is developed by the employment of spontaneity. They are slaves, or think themselves slaves, who have not the heart to be free. They alone are deeply conscious and deeply grateful for their freedom who have met and overcome the temptations to slavery. Hence the speculative difficulties against freedom and against prayer must be met by the practical use of our freedom. To the speculative difficulty, "It cannot be done," the best answer must ever be, "I have done it." And if, when the struggle is fiercest and the issue most uncertain, we find ourselves on our knees before God, Who made and keeps us free, the tide of victory will soon turn, and we shall enter into a deeper consciousness of the freedom we have kept and won.

IV

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PRAYER

In spite of our endeavours to state the difficult Theology of Prayer with an accuracy which would at once inform and reassure the mind, it may seem to some that prayer derives its power merely from God's will, and that it has little or no efficacy of its own. Under the title of the Psychology of Prayer we will seek to show how prayer works out some if not all its effects in accordance with definite psychological laws. In considering the various classes into which prayer naturally falls we have already had occasion to remark the presence of law in supernatural beings or spheres of actions. Still more, perhaps, in what we are about to say shall we detect proofs that even in the sphere of prayer the God of our heart's desire is a God of Law—the one being, indeed, Whose life is love, and Whose love is the first and furthest-reaching of all laws.

We shall not think it wrong to hold that prayer produces some and it may be most of its effects naturally by recognising and stimulating the natural functions of our spiritual faculties. Not that prayer ever remains a natural rather than a supernatural act. But just as we say that fire naturally burns and water naturally seeks its level, so may it be said that supernatural principles or endowments naturally result in certain supernatural acts and habits.

We shall speak more especially of the prayer of petition, which is in some sort the essential prayer of souls still on earth. Moreover, we shall take it for granted that the essential object of this prayer is union with God. To use the words of St. Thomas: "In prayer we must chiefly seek to be united with God. (Ps. xxvi.) One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." [1] This union takes place through grace, and may be prevented taking place, or may be destroyed after taking place, by sin and evil habits. Prayer for union with God must

[1] 2^{a} 2^{ae}, Qu. 8, Art. 1, ad. 2^{m}.

necessarily be of two kinds. Souls in sin must pray to be rid of their sin, and souls in grace must pray to avoid sin and grow in grace. We have thus set ourselves the task of showing how prayer rids the soul of sin, or defends it from sin by certain natural laws.

Sin is a human act directed towards an unlawful object. Every being which is an object of liking to us must enter into definite relations with our mind and will—with our will more than with our mind. When the soul awakes to the fact of the wickedness of its course of action, its first endeavour is to prevent the object from being henceforth an object to its mind and will. This is never an easy task, especially if length of time has brought about an evil habit. In order successfully to fight against this evil, the unlawful object must be replaced by a lawful object. To take away an unlawful object without replacing it is merely to leave the house swept and garnished for seven other evil passions worse than the first to enter in. This substitution of what is good for what is evil requires of us a recognition of its goodness and a heartfelt desire to make tha

goodness our own. At the same time it requires a concomitant recognition that the previous object was reprehensible, and that our heart ought not to have been allowed to go out to it. These are the definite relations which are set up between the new object and the old on the one hand, and the mind and will of our soul on the other.

In this adjustment of new relations, or in the continued adjustment of old relations to lawful objects, no force works more powerfully or more naturally than prayer. Grace, indeed, is the motive force that places us or keeps us in the supernatural state. We are not concerned to question this. But whilst it is clear that sanctifying grace, strictly speaking, is not prayer, there is a sense in which prayer under the influence of God is not the least of God's graces, and is in a measure the source of all the rest. Of the many miracles that Our Blessed Lord wrought upon the souls and bodies of others during His lifetime, none were wrought without prayer. The prayer of faith can not only remove mountains; its jurisdiction is so wide that Our Blessed Lord has said, "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it

you" (John xvi. 23). We must not think that because prayer seems an act, and even the highest act, of the freewill, that therefore it ceases in any way to be a grace, and the divinely appointed source of most of our graces. The over-world of spiritual forces is continuous with the under-world of natural forces. Nature and Grace when united become a unity rather than a mere union. Freewill is never more free and never more itself than when Grace is acting upon it and through it. To show how prayer produces certain spiritual effects, so to say, naturally and in accordance with law, is by no means to deny that these effects are supernatural in principle and character.

So much seems necessary to bear in mind whilst we are endeavouring to watch the operation of certain fixed laws in the supernatural workings of prayer. These workings must now be dealt with more closely. For the sake of clearness we will deal—first, with the effect of prayer in regulating the relation of the object to the mind; secondly, with the effect of prayer in regulating the relation of the object to the will; and, thirdly, we will exemplify this by two examples.

The part played by the mind in all human acts is to represent the object, and to represent it as good or evil. It remains a fact and a mystery that the mind can call good evil and evil good. It would be beside our point to account for the fact, and still more beside our point to endeavour to account for it by the Socratic axiom, "All sin is error." Yet it may be conceded that all sin contains an error. An evil life is not merely a crime; it is a blunder. There would be less sin if men could take an arm's-length view of the object of sin, and could be prevailed upon to see not only its most pleasant side, but its most heinous side. It is this objective view of sin that is provided for us by prayer. To kneel down in body or in spirit is to place ourselves in the best frame of mind for understanding things as they are. To make an object the matter of prayer is necessarily to make it the object of reflection. Even the delay caused by our prayer will remove the object to arm's-length in time if not in space. If we allow it to crowd upon us, it will end by prevailing. Its weight and size will be exaggerated. But to pray about it will focus

its many rays and narrow it to its true dimensions. We shall make it an object of reflection rather than of impulse, of reason rather than emotion. Moreover, to view it from below against a background of divine things is to view it in position. To abstract an object from its natural bed or setting is often to substract its true value and substitute an exaggerated value. Even lawful means towards an end can be over-estimated if looked upon as an end. Still more may unlawful means be taken for lawful, if they are not looked at in the light of the end. Judas betrayed Jesus Christ the Son of God probably because for the moment he forgot that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. When we pray we hold both the unlawful object in the best light for seeing it at its worst, and the lawful object in the best light for seeing it at its best. The object is seen in the best objective light and position, and in the best subjective frame of mind. We look on it as a means to an end; and we make it an object of reflection rather than of impulse. In other words, we carefully adjust its relations to our mind.

But no less intricate and essential is the adjustment of the object's relations to our will. We cannot pray without gradually, and it may be unconsciously, converting mere empty wishing into willing. The secret of the world's failures is that there are many more found to wish than to will. With an insight into human nature which is beyond praise, St. Thomas distinguishes between Wish (*Voluntas*), the mere liking for the end, and Will, or Intention (*Intentio*), the liking for the means and the end. Assuredly, in many cases the battle of life centres round the work of changing wish into will—mere nerveless desires into strenuous striving. Prayer begins this battle by keeping the end of life steadily in view. Thus, the soul that prays to be rid of an unlawful object, or to be faithful to a lawful object, uses the allurements of the end to counteract the allurements of an object which we cannot enjoy without sin, and to compensate for the tediousness of an object which we cannot retain without effort. As this resolute retention of the means and end before consciousness is the voluntary act

which we call Attention, the soul begins its first struggle to change the water of mere wishing into the strong wine of willing. Moreover, the soul begins the formation of a good habit by repeated acts. Not that repetition of acts begets a habit; but repetition of acts for a definite end gives the soul a definite bias, not merely towards the end, but towards the acts which in this case are the means towards the end. Bad habits may be formed by mere impulsive repetition of acts. Good habits must be formed by deliberate repetition of acts. Thus the act of praying, whereby we prevent our soul from impulsive action, and keep the end as well as the means before consciousness, begins the formation of good habits. And it does all this not only under the attraction of the highest end, but under the sanction of the purest motive. It chooses a field of battle under the eye of the Sovereign. It recalls His own deadly struggle, His wounds, and His glorious victory. It cheers its drooping spirits by the hope of His congratulation. It hears Him saying, "Well done; welcome." It makes the

struggle not merely one of right and wrong, of abstract ends and principles, but a battle of persons, of one soul against another in the sight of the three Persons of the Heavenly Court. No wonder, then, that the soul without prayer is a house without a tenant, and the Christian without prayer is a house wherein Satan dwells as tenant. No wonder that we can do all things and overcome all things in Him Who strengtheneth us, and that if we ask the Father, in the name of the Son, for anything needful for our struggle, the Father will give it to us, and if we weary not in asking, He will not fail to give us the victory in the end.

We may now exemplify this—first, by imagining a soul struggling to free itself from habits of carnal sin; and, secondly, by imagining a soul struggling to save itself from acquiring a habit of intellectual sin. We shall thus examine the two chief classes of sin, in the first of which the soul is said to turn to the creature, and in the second of which the soul is said to turn from the creature. In the case of carnal habits,

the soul has to exert its strength to the utmost to rise to better things. Sins of this nature are directed towards a personal object. They are often interwoven with emotions which are amongst the strongest and best of our nature. They are made up of that mysterious "turning to the creature" which holds such sway over the human heart. Even when the object is not present in person, it is present in fancy, wielding a power only less than that wielded by the reality. The struggle to depose the object from its usurped tyranny is hopeless without prayer. Only when the experienced director has persuaded the soul to pray does he feel that victory has become a possibility. When the struggling soul has found strength enough to set the object, even for a few moments, at arm's-length, amendment, if not within sight, is not beyond hope. Still more assurance will be felt if the soul can be persuaded not merely to pray, but to go on in prayer.

Our Blessed Lord counselled His disciples that they were "to pray always, and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1), and by a gracious show of exaggeration

He went on to represent His Heavenly Father as being wearied into acquiescence by repeated prayer. What is merely a divine metaphor when applied to God becomes a reality when applied to the soul striving to rise from sin. Assuredly it is vain to think that one swiftly formed resolve, even when seconded by a prayer is strong enough to overturn the kingdom of Satan within the soul. Yet it is not vain to think that the tyranny of evil habits may yield to daily resolves and daily prayer. One glimpse of God will stir up emotions which at least will make sin appear detestable; the prolonged sight of the All-Beautiful will end by winning the soul from all that shares the divine beauty only to disfigure it. Hence the oft-told effects of a daily Ave kept up during a course of sin have not merely a supernatural but a natural explanation. Moreover, to spend even the space of a Pater in presence of God will present the eternal beauty as a rival object to the soul's affections. The soul that prays without faltering will come sooner or later to see that what it searches for in its unlawful quest can be found in God alone. It will recall past days in

the bitterness of its heart. It will realise that its present course of life has brought it down to the husks of swine. It will remember the pure white bread of its father's home. The prayers of childhood learned from those we loved and now remembered after a long forgetfulness will fill the aching heart with the gladdening thought that with God, Our Father, there is always a father's welcome, however late at eve the prodigal draws nigh the home. Longings for the innocence of past years will rise unbidden in the heart. How beautiful will seem the sinlessness of childhood! How full the peace of sinlessness! How deep and degrading the slough of sin! How long-suffering, how merciful, how kind, how fatherly the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced to give sinners at once the hope and the strength to repent. Thoughts like these passing through the soul will make it feel that it need not stick fast for ever in the rut of sin. Thoughts like these abiding with the soul —gently sinking into mind and heart—lighting up the inward eye to see, and nerving the arm to grasp, will banish sin and open the doors of the soul to the God of peace and love. Prayer, long-

continued and oft-repeated, will bring forth its natural fruit in the soul, in a union of mind and heart with the mind and will of God.

The same function of prayer, not in winning but in safeguarding grace, may now be traced in the sphere of Faith. If we take somewhat greater pains to analyse the function of prayer in keeping our faith in God, the reason will be found in the importance of that function and perhaps even in the interest of the inquiry.

One characteristic of faith will serve as a starting-point. Faith differs from all other functions of the mind in having the unseen for its object. It is "the evidence of things that appear not." That it is a justifiable activity of mind we may be allowed to assume. Faith is a phenomenon. Faith is a fact. For the moment we are more concerned to inquire how prayer helps in its preservation than to inquire whether it is worth preserving. It can only be preserved by a course of action identical with that which is necessary for the preservation of all the highest functions and faculties of the race and of the individual. We are all familiar with the most ac-

cepted evolutionary theory that in the struggle for existence the race is not to the strong, nor to the clever, nor to any sort of intellectual supremacy. Progress is essentially moral. The prizes of life are less for men of genius than for men of character. The higher unselfish, or as they are called, altruistic feelings alone can guarantee the survival of a nation. What is this but to enunciate the law that those races are doomed to destruction which, throughout the daily intercourse with an ever-present world of fascinating realities, cannot reach out under the sense of duty and in the strength of great faith and hope to those unseen ends and destinies which await their children's children? Let a race of men gradually develop along a line of self-contented and selfish intellectualism, as did Ancient Greece, and like Greece it will fall into degradation and destruction. Let it only less selfishly take pleasure for its object and its end is no less assured. The higher altruistic and race-preserving qualities gradually dwindle until at length complete atrophy of the faculty is the harbinger of complete destruction of the race. The same law obtains in the sphere

of the higher individual functions. Through disuse of those faculties which require what we may call an effort to visualise the unseen, a man may suffer the loss of his own mind.

An object-lesson in the operation of this law may be found in the life-story of Charles Darwin, founder of a modern school of evolution. Nature had given him no very great philosophic breadth of thought. Thus we find him writing: "My power to follow a long and purely abstract train of thought is very limited; and therefore I could never have succeeded with metaphysics."[1] He is also reported to have said, "I find that my mind is so fixed by the inductive method that I cannot appreciate the deductive method."[2] A very significant fact is given in his own words: "What is far more important, my love of natural science has been steady and ardent."[3] In early life his faith was very keen. He used to ask God to help him "to be in time for school" (p.

[1] "Life and Letters of Charles Darwin," by F. Darwin, 3rd edition, vol. i. ch. ii. p. 102.

[2] Spencer Jones, "England and the Holy See," ch. iv. § 2.

[3] "Life and Letters of Charles Darwin," by F. Darwin, 3rd edition, vol. i. ch. ii. p. 103.

31). A German psychological society examined his photograph, and after public discussion one of the speakers affirmed that Darwin had the "bump of reverence" developed to a great degree (p. 45). But if reverence was a natural gift it rarely occupied itself with the higher objects of reverence. Thus he wrote in 1871: "I have never systematically thought much on religion in relation to science, or on morals in relation to society" (ch. viii. p. 306). The natural result was the gradual and complete atrophy of the higher intellectual and moral faculties required for the act of faith. Few pages in modern literature are more pathetic than that in which he wrote: "Thus disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate, but was at last complete. The rate was so slow that I felt no distress" (pp. 308, 309). The Duke of Argyll has recorded a few words spoken by Darwin in the last year of his life: "I said to Mr. Darwin with reference to some of his own remarkable words on the fertilisation of orchids and upon . . . various other observations he made of wonderful contrivances for certain purposes in nature," that "it was im-

possible to look at these without seeing that they were the effect and the expression of mind. I shall never forget Mr. Darwin's answer. He looked at me very hard and said, 'Well, that often comes over me with overwhelming force; but at other times,' and he shook his head vaguely, adding, 'it seems to go away."[1]

Concomitant with this gradual atrophy of the higher faith-faculties was the decay and, we may even say, the degradation of the faculties of artistic taste. Nor is it to be wondered at that the same absorption in material phenomena which dulled his sense of divine Truth should likewise blind his sense of divine Beauty. He writes of himself as a boy: "Up to the age of twenty or beyond it, poetry of many kinds, such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley[2] gave me great pleasure, and even as a schoolboy I took great delight in Shakespeare. . . . I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very great, delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read

[1] *Good Words*, April 1885, p. 244.

[2] A wide range of æsthetic sympathy!

a line of poetry. I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also lost my taste for pictures and music. Music generally sets me thinking too energetically on what I have been at work on instead of giving me pleasure. I retain some taste for fine scenery, but it does not cause me the exquisite delight which it formerly did. On the other hand novels which are works of the imagination, though not of a very high order, have been for years a wonderful relief and pleasure to me. . . . My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of a large collection of facts; but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone on which the higher tastes depend I cannot conceive. . . . The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and *more probably to the moral character by enfeebling the emotional* part of our nature" (pp. 100–102). Here we may remark a striking law: those faculties were fully kept and fully developed which were often used, *e.g.*, power of generalisation; those were partially

kept which were sometimes used, *e.g.*, love of scenery; and those were completely lost which were rarely or never used, *e.g.*, love of poetry and art. The patient scientist sums up his informal examination of conscience with a pathetic but futile resolution. "A man with a mind more highly organised or better constituted than mine would not, I suppose, have thus suffered; and if *I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week*, for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use" (pp. 101, 102). There is no mention of a resolution to make some weekly use of faith!

Nothing could serve as a more striking illustration of the function of prayer as the warden of faith than this autobiography of the great scientist. To believe in the unseen is to make use of one of the highest moral faculties of the soul. Faculties such as these can only be kept by being ever kept in use. The weekly presence at Holy Mass, the frequent partaking of the *Mysterium Fidei*, the mystery of Faith in Holy

Communion, the daily communion with our unseen Father, if only for a moment in morning and evening prayer, will afford us that practice of childlike lowliness of heart which keeps the eye of faith alive and alert within us. This chapel where we are now assembled serves to enforce these words of mine with a fitness which seems beyond a mere coincidence. For many years, as you know, it was the workshop of the late Professor Romanes, whose life was a story of the loss and of the recovery of faith. In his thoughts on religion he has left the touching confession of the cause of his disbelief: "Even the simplest act of will in regard to religion—that of prayer—has not been performed by me for at least a quarter of a century, simply because it has seemed to me so impossible to pray I cannot will the attempt."[1] Here under this roof he worked out the problem of his life. Here he caught sight a second time of Him Who was his Father, and before Whom he was a child in mind though not perhaps in heart. The

[1] Quoted by the Duke of Argyll, "Philosophy of Belief," p. 405, note.

room is now a chapel. Prayer rises up within its walls in daily acknowledgment of God. Daily too is Christ mystically slain on its altars, where night and day He abides for our sakes. It is a symbol of the truth that the soul of man is something more than a mere workshop of scientific facts. It is the Home of God—the See of Christ—the Altar of Faith. To keep that faith alive we must keep it in daily use. Paralysis of our faith, like paralysis of the brain, is first detected in the knees and tongue. Habits of carelessness, even in the simple matter of morning and evening prayer, may mean the loss of those higher moral faculties which alone prepare us for our eternal life. But habits of dutifulness in giving God our Father daily acknowledgment that it is He Who rules our going in and out by night and by day will mean not merely the brightening of the world we now endure or enjoy, but the possession of the better world that will not pass away.

V

VOCAL AND MENTAL PRAYER

It would be impossible for us whilst considering the subject of prayer to overlook the important divisions of Vocal and Mental prayer; yet it would be equally impossible for us to compass all that we might profitably say within the narrow limits of one Conference. If, then, our thoughts seem disconnected and unfinished, if they seem suggestions rather than complete ideas, it will be due to the greatness of the subject and the scantiness of the time at our disposal.

The phrase, Vocal Prayer, may unfortunately convey a false impression to those who take the word vocal in its mere etymological meaning. "Vocal" prayer, if so used, would limit prayer to the spoken word. But in that sense it would neither serve as an antithesis to mental prayer,

nor would it exhaust the various non-mental exercises whereby the mind and heart of man can be raised to God. The antithesis of mind is body; the antithesis of mental prayer should be bodily prayer. But by synecdoche the whole range of non-mental prayer is called after its chief part, vocal prayer. It would be incorrect to think that the other forms of bodily prayer are neither greatly practised in the Church nor greatly valued. The Church, like her Divine Spouse, "knows what is in man" too well to neglect any object or function whereby the impact of the world may be deadened and a new force added to the world of unseen realities. Even as the Church in her sacred ceremonies sanctions and uses the five outward senses as avenues of approach for divine ideas, so also does she make use of all the communicative organs of the body as channels of intercourse and intercession with God. To her the body of man is not a manichean load upon the soul, not a creation of an evil spirit, not an essentially evil work of an essentially evil principle,

but a creature of God, a life partner of the soul, and, in the sacramental dispensation, a divinely ordained channel of grace. In active recognition of this principle, the Church uses many forms of bodily prayer. In her non-liturgical rosary the fingers are made a means of prayer. She bends the knees in genuflection. She sets the wrought figure of a cross upon the priest's shoulders. She signs the forehead, lips, and heart. She bows the head. She strews ashes upon the brow. In the solemn worship of the Mass bodily prayer of almost every form is pressed into the service of her emotions or petitions. The eyes of the priest are raised towards heaven or cast down on the sacred host, his hands are now outstretched, now lifted up, now joined together, now laid gently upon the altar beside the host. And on days of solemn fast and intercession her sacred ministers cast themselves upon the ground, and there, with their face to the dust, they acknowledge their own sins and the sins of the people. What the Church thinks well to do, her children may well

imitate, if not in public, at least in private, when the spirit of bodily prayer stirs their heart.

Those who practise bodily prayer of whatever sort should clearly understand what reasons have prompted the Church to adopt and develop it. The first reason is based on a strikingly and characteristically wide view of man's nature and destiny. Prayer being essentially a recognition of the sovereignty of God over man, the whole man must share in the acknowledgment. No part of man can exempt itself from the act of worship. At all times necessary, this acknowledgment becomes a double need now that the Incarnation has raised soul and body to higher destinies. The Beatific Vision, with its resurrection and glorification of the body as it has given the body new destinies has laid upon it new duties. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians seems to suggest that even as God—the "courteous God" as Mother Juliana of Norwich expresses it—has made His divine genuflection to redeem us, so

must we bow down to acknowledge and accept His plenteous redemption "He emptied Himself. . . . He humbled Himself . . . that in the name of Jesus every *knee* should bow . . . and every *tongue* should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father (Phil. ii. 7–11). The κατάβασις and κένωσις, the divine condescension and divine self-denial, have laid upon the knee and tongue of man, that is, upon man's whole spiritual and corporal being, a doubly urgent duty of worshipping God in bodily prayer.

A second motive for bodily prayer is found in the relation existing between the organs of the body and the faculties of the soul. When it is recognised what power the bodily organs have to influence the functions of the spiritual faculties bodily prayer becomes a necessity. Nothing tends to excite greater fervour of soul than a wise use of the body. Souls that could not make the briefest formal meditation on the Passion find it easy to make the Stations of the Cross, or to say the Sorrowful Mysteries of the

Rosary. Others find a simple genuflection their most expressive act of faith in the Real Presence. Following the lead of her divine Founder, the Church has surrounded the sacraments with an accompaniment of bodily ceremonies which not only help to instruct the mind, but serve to enkindle the flame of fervour in the heart. How much is our soul helped to fervent contrition by the genuflection on both knees by the side of the priest! How much is our soul moved to humility, reverence, and love when we kneel down before the sanctuary holding the pure white linen cloth lest a particle of that wonderful Love-feast should suffer the slightest irreverence! The Contemptative Orders of the Church contrive to spend long hours in fervent intercession and praise only by an almost military employment of bodily exercises. Of them it may be said, "Not slothful. In spirit fervent. Serving the Lord. . . . Instant in prayer" (Romans xii. 11, 12). Blessed Angela of Foligno puts the matter very pointedly "Furthermore I exhort and entreat of thee with

thy whole soul, if thy soul be not lifted up to see the sorrow-stricken God-Man, that thou go back and begin again, and consider the whole way of His Passion and Cross. But if thou canst not do this in thy heart, at least say with thy lips the prayers that relate to the Passion carefully and often, for what is frequently said with the lips in the end giveth warmth and fervour to the heart."[1]

A third motive is found in the need for common prayer. It is only with partial truth that we speak of mental prayer being made in common. Certainly we should never call mental prayer common prayer. If the strong prayer of a church or a people is to ascend like one voice to God, purely mental prayer must give way to bodily, and chiefly to vocal, prayer. In this world men's thoughts can only be brought into one through bodily means. Were bodily prayer displeasing to God, the voice of common prayer would be silent on the earth. And how great a loss would that mean!

[1] "Visions and Instructions" (London, 1871), p. 202.

How deep emotions may be stirred merely by bodily prayer even when vocal prayer is absent, or as good as absent, may be seen in our churches at Sunday Mass when the bell rings out the Elevation of the Body and Blood of Christ. Not a word is spoken. The people kneel like one body, with head bowed down and bated breath, until the bell rings out, and they know that the chalice has been laid on the altar and covered with the pall. Then the half-suppressed sigh that re-echoes through the church testifies to the depth of the emotion enkindled by a prayer that was bodily, yet not vocal. Or again, who would not be moved as the people, in the hour of some public sorrow, crowd into the presence of God on the Altar to take their beads and crave His mercy? The simple monotone of that simplest of prayers becomes a subtle many-stringed instrument expressing a thousand moods and intensities of emotion. Such a prayer rose up from the Eternal City on the first Rosary Sunday, bringing safety to Europe and witnessing mightily

to the hidden force of bodily prayer said in common by a people who believed in God.

The overthrow of bodily prayer as distinct from vocal prayer was not the least evil brought about by the rise of Protestantism. It is sad to read in what fantastic forms the imprisoned instinct for bodily prayer has, from time to time, asserted itself. Even in these islands, which are commonly looked upon as undemonstrative, it is questionable whether the wholesale suppression of bodily prayer has not suppressed one of the strongest and finest instincts of our nature. We often look upon bodily signs of fervour as being confined to southern races. But we should probably feel not a little surprised if we went amongst non-Catholic poor and saw how their simple-hearted expressions of emotion lead them to extravagant and sometimes irreverent demonstrations of fervour. A description of a mission given by the well-known Robert Aitken may give food for thought. As Aitken preached "sobs and ejaculations might be frequently heard on all sides. . . . The sight that met

me there," in the schoolroom, after the service, "was one not easily forgotten. A crowd, for the most part of men and youths, were on their knees wrestling hard in prayer, more or less in audible voice. Mr. Aitken was going round—and others also—suggesting words of encouragement to one and another. . . . It was a strange scene indeed. Some men almost in ecstatic attitude, their arms stretched out and their hands tightly clasped, their eyes fixed, and seemingly lost to all things sensible around. No one could think for a moment that there was anything put on, and that all was not a reality to them."[1] It is hard to realise that scenes like these are still enacted in our midst. Extravagances of a more distressing kind bear pathetic witness to the instinct for bodily prayer. Nor need the well-marked revival of interest in liturgical services be taken as anything less than another and less extravagant form of the same witness. St. John of the Cross, the Mystic of

[1] *Dublin Review*, Oct. 1899, "Robert Aitken" by the Bishop of Clifton.

Mystics, has some practical words of advice which we can hardly afford to overlook. Speaking of a certain class of beginners, he says: "They load themselves with images, rosaries, and crucifixes, curious and costly; now taking up one, then another; now changing them and then resuming them again. At one time they will have them of a certain fashion, at another time of another, prizing one more than another because more curious or more costly. Some may be seen with an Agnus Dei or with relics and medals, like children with coral. . . . I knew a person who for more than ten years used continually, without interruption, a cross rudely formed of a piece of blessed palm and fastened together by a common pin, until I took it away. This was a person not deficient in sense or intellect. I knew another who had a rosary made of the backbones of fish, and whose devotion, I am certain, was not on that account less in the eyes of God."[1] It may be suggested that any clinging to forms without

[1] "The Obscure Night of the Soul," Bk. i. ch. iii. pp. 334, 335.

the realities, to means without the end, to bodily prayer without some kind of mental prayer, is constructively superstitious. The derivative force of superstition reminds us that whatever confidence is set on a form, an object, or a means over and beyond what it naturally demands, is so far superstitious.

And thus we are led on to the subject of Mental Prayer without which merely bodily prayer remains constructively superstitious and practically worthless. But we are not to be supposed the advocates of the preposterous principle that all prayer not based upon meditation is superstitious. There are many kinds of mental prayer of which one alone is called Meditation. Sufficient mental influx is insured by a good primary intention and mere verbal or bodily attention. To this subject we shall have occasion to return in our concluding Conference. Of more immediate interest is the division of Mental Prayer into what St. Thomas calls Thought (*Cogitatio*), Meditation, and Contemplation. His division rests upon such an

interesting fact of psychology that we may be pardoned for developing it in our own way. In all processes of discovery we start from an *à posteriori* acquisition of facts, for example, when we merely observe the various positions and motions of the heavenly bodies. This process may, and perhaps must, consist in detecting the various simple relations of juxtaposition or immediate influence. Though it is not concerned with finding reasons, it is nevertheless an act of the reason. The second act is more fitly called reasoning. It follows after the acquisition or recognition of facts with their simplest relations, and is concerned with discovering the general principles and still more general relations which, so to say, are the Soul and Law of the facts and more particular relations. Thus the knowledge of astronomical facts stimulates a thinking mind to discover astronomical laws which alone can make a science of astronomy. Or again, when the science is being taught to a student rather than discovered by a master, the student's

second act after accepting the preliminary facts will necessarily be to recognise that the accepted principles rest upon and explain the facts. This is often a process needing a good deal of mental effort. Sometimes the discoverer makes many wide guesses, only to find them discounted by the facts. Or again, he may be convinced of the principle without being able to make the facts prove it. Indeed, so often is this the case that reasoning has been wittily defined as a mental process not for drawing conclusions from premises, but for finding premises for conclusion. Lastly, when true facts are seen to rest upon and to be explained by true principles, one simple view of a fact will bring to mind the many principles which it involves, and one simple view of a principle will bring to mind the many facts from which it springs. In either case an intuitive glance at some simple fact or principle gives the trained mind food for the deepest thought. To the trained astronomer what a world of thought is suggested by simply recalling the Law of Gravity.

To the biologist what profound mysteries lie hidden in the sight of a child building its mock castles in the lifeless sand!

These three acts hold their place in the intellectual element of prayer. There may be mere aimless cogitation, almost akin to thought-wandering; there may be reasoning or meditation; and there may be contemplation or the intuitive glance into the divine principles of a human event or the human issues of a divine principle. The prayer of contemplation may not be so uncommon as at first sight we suppose, yet it is sufficiently uncommon to excuse us from any longer stay on its analysis, whilst yet we would suggest that to analyse it more fully would be well worth our best efforts. Nor need we delay for any length of time upon the subject of mere *Cogitatio,* or mere mind-loitering. One thing we must say in justice to the majority of us. To loiter is not necessarily to lose time. To wander is not necessarily to lose our way. If our loitering is amidst divine realities or principles, if we merely gaze and

wander now here, now there in astonishment at the magnificence of God's world or Our Blessed Lord's Incarnation, we may still be praying, though not praying to our utmost. Meditation then, as distinct from *Cogitatio* and Contemplation, is essentially a work of reasoning, *i.e.* of patient, step-by-step progress from principles to facts, or from facts to principles; indeed to be quite accurate, it is perhaps generally a progress from facts or principles which we know to principles and facts which we likewise know merely for the sake of recognising or of strengthing the vividness with which we recognise the relations between them. For example, if we meditate on an event such as the crowning of thorns, we know beforehand that it contains superabundant witness of Our Blessed Lord's love, tenderness, and patience. Our meditation merely serves to show this more clearly, to bring it home; or, as Newman puts it, to convert a notional into a real assent. Or again, when we meditate on a principle and virtue such as patience, we know that it should rule

our whole life, by controlling all we do or suffer. To meditate on patience serves merely to bring home to us still more vividly the need of patience in all the daily actions of our real life, to raise regrets for where we have failed, and to prepare resolutions for where we may again fail. Yet we are far from denying that there are times when we set about meditating on a truth or an event with little or no knowledge of what it may contain, or whither the Holy Spirit may lead the soul.

We have been endeavouring to arrive at a complete idea of the nature of meditation from its own inner constitution. It remains but to complete our examination by looking at its outer aim or end. To have a clear notion of what good is served by meditation will not only complete our abstract view of it, but will quicken and enrich our practical use of it. Our morning meditation will be made all the better for a knowledge of the fruit it may be expected to yield. St. Thomas sets down two effects of meditation, Fervour and Joy.[1] These

[1] 2^a 2^{ae}, Qu. 82, Art. 3 and 4. "Delectatio": we have elsewhere translated this by pleasure.

two effects belong to the will. Fervour is readiness of heart to do the divine Will. Joy is contentment of heart at the fulfilment of our own will, or at the acquisition of what is good. Meditation which does not beget fervour has been ill-made, and is little less than time misspent. The end of all prayer is set before us in the beginning of the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Will be done."

It is touching to notice how this essential prayer alone rises to Our Blessed Lord's lips in the Garden. When all else had failed Him, He could only lay His heart's sorrow, His heart's longing, before His Heavenly Father with the simple petition, "Thy Will be done." But it is also to be noticed what fervour suddenly came into His soul. The mere thought of His sufferings had been allowed by a mysterious providence to take the strength from Him and to reduce Him to such a state of prostration that only the three who had witnessed the glory of Mount Thabor were allowed to witness the weakness and struggle of the Garden

of Olives. Yet when the prayer was ended His soul seems to have found or shown a new fervour, and He who allowed Himself to bend under the thought of death, by sheer force and fervour of will held His head high through death itself. It is, then, the one aim of meditation to enkindle a flame of fervour, so as to say with the Psalmist, "My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out" (Ps. xxxviii. 4). Thus the true criterion of a good meditation is not the meditation itself, but the duties and trials that come after meditation. If after our so-called communion with God we are still discontented with our lot, or burdensome to our neighbours, or peevish under affronts, or impatient under trials, or hard towards sinners, or uncharitable towards failings, or indifferent to the poor, or heedless of temptation, or inclined to idleness, or wasteful of time, or obstinate in trifles, or self-indulgent, or critical, we may rest assured that though we have meditated, we have not reached the end of meditation. We must ever

distinguish between the essential and the accidental end. Joy is indeed the last thing to be attained, and fervour the first thing to be sought. The joy that we may lawfully seek is the joy of fervour outlined for us in the words of the Psalmist: "My soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God and was delighted" (Ps. lxxvi. 3, 4). Meditation must first seek a fervent identification of our will with the will of God. When our truant will has been led back to Him, and we say "Thy will be done," the glow of contentment that spreads abroad within us is the joy and peace which the world cannot give. To make use of meditation as a kind of spiritual anodyne is to abuse it. Fervour can, and indeed must, be sought. Joy must rather be found than sought. We must carefully watch over ourselves lest the pleasure we feel in meditation be nothing more than an æsthetic pleasure borne in upon us by our surroundings, by the silence, by the beauty of the images or pictures we contemplate, or an intellectual pleasure springing naturally

from the exercise of reason, from the discovery of new truths, from communion with intellectual principles, or from a sense of our own skilfulness in reasoning. Two sources alone can lead us to true fervour and true joy—the thought of God's mercy, and the thought of our misery—*Dei misericordia et propria miseria.*[1] Hence we are recommended by all spiritual writers to meditate mostly on the Life and Death of Our Blessed Lord. Nowhere else can we read so eloquent a declaration of God's love and our own sinfulness, nowhere else can we see so plainly the havoc wrought by sin and the remedy which God has drawn for us even from our sinning.

This leads us at once to the kinds of meditation which we may use in enkindling fervour and joy by means of meditation on God's mercy and our own misery or sinfulness. We can do no better than follow the usual division into formal and informal meditation. Each of these two methods of meditation has its

[1] $2^a\ 2^{ae}$, Qu. 82, Art. 4.

own advantages and drawbacks. Each is suited for one person and not for another, for one reason and not for another, for one subject-matter and not another, and even for one state of feelings rather than for another. It is useless to compare the two methods, as they each work on different though parallel lines, and both arrive at the same journey's end, though by different routes. No two souls will thrive on exactly the same spiritual dietary, just as no two men can keep in health by the same food and exercise. Some men for health's sake require a daily walk in the open air. But they merely stroll about, watching whatever catches their attention, no matter how trivial. They may have a fixed walk through certain well-known woods and fields. But as each day comes round with its change of sunshine and cloud, of storm and calm, of leaf and flower, their eye is rested by the green grass, their ear soothed by the lowing of the kine, their imagination stilled by the quiet beauty of the earth and sky, the mind nerved

and strengthened by almost unconscious communion with the spirit of the scene. Others take their daily exercise in a formal way. They drill or practise definite bodily exercises, use one set of movements to strengthen the lungs, another to develop the limbs, another to harden the body to cold or heat, and so on. Each of these two methods has its own advantages and drawbacks which make it suited for one person rather than another, or for the same person at one time rather than at another. We must never seek to bring every one to the same, and especially to our own, method of prayer.

There may doubtless be rules and psychological laws holding good here as elsewhere in the spiritual life. But they are so subtle that they have rarely been formulated. The judgment of a skilled spiritual guide is generally true even when it would seem to rest upon an intuition rather than on any formal appeal to abstract laws. Still we may dare to enunciate one law which has exceptions enough to make caution in its exercise a duty.

Formal meditation has a definite harmony with the active life; informal meditation with the contemplative. Those whose chief business it is to mingle with the world and to fill their imaginations with the world's myriad and engrossing images need an artificial means for reining in the restlessness of fancy. But those whose course of life leads them to dwell more with God than with the world, even in their flights of imagination, rarely quit divine things. I do not mean that informal meditation is fitted only for the cloister, and that formal meditation is confined to the world. There are many whose nature or whose grace allows them to move amongst the images of the world as a man born blind. When a man through disposition or habit has become familiar with the realities of the other world and, so to say, irresponsive to worldly imaginings, he may be safely left to informal meditations. He may be allowed to take up the pages of Holy Writ and drink in the spiritual meaning of one of its divine phrases or events. But those whose

imaginations are still peopled by a thousand haunting images of persons and things had better rein in the flights of their fancy by the curb of formal exercises and the more logical apparatus of a book of meditations.

VI

LITURGICAL PRAYER

In speaking of Vocal Prayer we touched upon its intimate relationship with Liturgical worship. It was impossible to deal more at length with but one aspect, even though a most important one, of this section of our subject-matter. Nowadays, however, the subject of Liturgical Prayer is showing such signs of winning back its old place in the worship of men that to devote an entire Conference to it will hardly be out of place. You may have remarked how often we have done little else than suggest the most imperfect outlines of thought in what we have already said. Although we shall have dealt with prayer in eight Conferences, yet we have carefully kept our thoughts away from many most interesting divisions of prayer. For, to make a confession, we have found the sub-

ject so vast that even its by-paths and seldom-trodden ways have opened up thoughts upon thoughts, stretching out far beyond the power of mind to grasp and describe. Perhaps to be overburdened with the vastness of the subject will be itself a gain. When the realms of science are yielding undreamt-of treasures it may not be time lost to open out one of the supernatural regions only to find our minds staggered by the very wealth of phenomena and thought. Reflections like these seem natural to us when beginning never so cursory an effort to deal with Liturgical Prayer. To treat the subject as it might and should be treated would require a literature rather than a Conference. Yet we must make the attempt to confine within the limits of a brief Conference one of the widest subjects of research. We can only hope to avoid confusion by laying down the chief aspects of Liturgical Prayer, which we shall take to be its Principles, its History, and its Characteristics.

There is a passage in the Summa which sets

down the principles of Liturgical Prayer with a characteristic breadth and accuracy. In answer to the question whether determinate things are needed in the sacraments, St. Thomas replies that "in the employment of the sacraments two things can be considered, to wit, divine worship and the sanctification of man.[1] The first of these pertains to man in relation to God; and the second, on the contrary, pertains to God in relation to man.[2] Every sacrament, *i.e.* every Christ-appointed employment of material things and words in order to infuse grace, has a sacramental and a sacrificial aspect. As a sacrament it conveys gifts to men; as sacrificial it conveys man's offering and acknowledgment to God. Moreover, every sacrament has its liturgical aspect inasmuch as it is sacramental or sacrificial. Yet it is perhaps chiefly in their sacrificial character that liturgy is developed; for this reason, that God needs not many words or signs to convey His mystic boons to the

[1] "Cultus divinus et sanctificatio hominis."

[2] 2^{a} 2^{ae}, Qu. 60, Art. 5.

soul, whereas only by a combination of words and actions can man offer up his heart and soul in never-ending worship to God. Thus we have certain rites which are sacramental rather than sacrificial; we have the Blessed Eucharist, which is as sacrificial as sacramental, and we have lesser rites which are sacrificial rather than sacramental. It will be noted that the first division which contains all the sacraments except the Holy Eucharist, are not so strikingly liturgical as the Holy Eucharist. Confession and Extreme Unction, from the nature of the case, are almost non-liturgical; Confirmation and Matrimony are somewhat more liturgical in character, whilst Baptism and Holy Order have a highly developed liturgy of their own. It may also be remarked that in earlier ages of the Church, Baptism and Confirmation were only given at certain stated times of the year, when they formed parts of an elaborate liturgical function. But the above six sacraments, through their comparative unfrequency. or from being celebrated privately, are not cal-

culated to supply the faithful with any fixed liturgical object.

But the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, which is sacrificial almost more than sacramental, and common almost more than individual, is the object and occasion of the most elaborate ritual observances. Not only does it serve to convey each soul's wants to God, but it is the great Common Prayer, or Communion of Souls, which serves as a channel of the Church's united praise, thanksgiving, and petition. For this reason the Holy Mass is connected with all the other sacraments. They are either given during the course of it, or the ministers or matter needed for them are consecrated whilst it is being offered up. Over and beyond the partly sacramental and partly sacrificial rites are to be found others purely sacrificial and liturgical, which are, roughly speaking, grouped under the title of "The Divine Office." These purely liturgical observances are in some sort an extension of the ritual of the Blessed Sacrament. They seem to have sprung

up as the custom of reservation began to be more practised, and to have grown out of the natural wish of the Church to provide an earthly court and an earthly worship for the "Emmanuel"—our "God with us." Moreover, for the most part they are carried out with greatest observance by the cloistered religious whom the Church singles out to be the Body-guard of Our Blessed Lord. Certain other services—of local use or of no direct reference to the Blessed Sacrament, though of ecclesiastical use—are not grouped under the rubric of Liturgical Prayer. When it is remembered that our spiritual life is but the outcome of the sacraments, and the cause of all our sacrifices of work and praise, it will be seen on what foundations the whole edifice of liturgical prayer rests.

No more than the barest outline can be given of the history of liturgical prayer in the Christian Church. Parallel to the development of doctrine and organisation has run the development of worship. It is remarkable that the Sacred Scriptures refer more frequently

and more fully to doctrinal matters, such as the resurrection of the body, and to hierarchial matters, such as the Primacy of Peter, than to the matter of divine worship. Indeed, as far as we are aware, there is no explicit mention of the priesthood of the Apostles nor of their offering sacrifice. In the Acts of the Apostles xiii. 2, where our Douay Version reads: "And as they were *ministering* to the Lord and fasting," the Greek text reads λειτουργούντων δε ἀυτῶν τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ νηστευόντων, in which some commentators have rightly or wrongly seen a reference to liturgical acts. Nor need it be uncritical to see the same liturgical reference in the Epistle to the Hebrews xiii. 10: "We have an Altar, whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle." But few as are the indirect mentions of liturgical prayer, they are found for the most part, as might have been expected, in reference to the sacrament and sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist. Not only is the time of the first Eucharistic meal appointed, but the city, the

house, the supper-room are all the objects of careful and even miraculous arrangement. Indeed, it is recorded by St. Mark and St. Luke that it was "a cœnaculum grande, stratum," a supper-room, large, and furnished as befitted the first mystic offering of Him Whose "cross," in the fine phrase of St. Leo, "was the altar not of the Temple, but of the world."[1] Nor are actions and words wanting to complete the ritual requisites. There is a liturgical washing of feet, symbolical of that spiritual purification which still remains the necessary preparation for Holy Communion. There is the blessing and distribution of the divine Food and Drink. The sacred words of consecration are mentioned with an accuracy befitting their mystic import. Then when the meal is over both Matthew and Mark record the "hymn," which brought the sacred ceremony to a close and served as the last common prayer of the Master and His little flock, so soon to be parted.

[1] Serm. 8, *de Pass.*

The liturgical ideal thus set before them by the very action and words of Our Blessed Lord was not lost upon the first Christians, but served them as a model for common worship. Differences in use, sometimes amounting to abuses, were inevitable in communities scattered over the world, and with only casual means of communication. St. Paul, in his first letter to his Corinthian converts, instructs the neo-Christians in the essential features of their common prayer and common sacrifice, adding that he would set the rest in order.[1] In two of his latest Epistles, written during his first imprisonment, he gives a counsel which suggests the plan of the Divine office. To the Colossians he writes: "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles" (Col. iii. 16);[2] to the Ephesians: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles" (Eph. v. 19).[3] Some thirty or forty years after the death of St. Paul, Pliny, the friend of the Emperor Trajan and Proprætor

[1] διατάξομαι. [2] ψαλμοῖς ὕμνοις ᾠδαῖς. [3] ψαλμοῖς ὕμνοις ᾠδαῖς

of Bithynia, reporting on the number, influence, and pertinacity of the Christians there and in Pontus, makes a well-known mention of Christian liturgy: "This, the informers told me, was the whole of their crime or error, that they were accustomed to assemble on a stated day before dawn, and to say together a hymn to Christ as a god, and to bind themselves by an oath [*sacramento*] to keep from theft, robbery, adultery, unfaithfulness to promises, and all kinds of dishonest dealing.[1] After this they would separate, and then meet again for a meal, which was social and harmless." These liturgical services with their simple ritual, covering profound mysteries, had evidently made their way to the hearts of the people. He adds that the "superstition has spread not only in the cities, but to the villages and the open country." But on applying persecution "the forsaken temples begin to be filled again, and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived."[2] When persecution ceased and

[1] This would seem to describe the ἐξομολόγησις, or Confession.
[2] Pliny, Letters, Traj. 96.

liturgy exchanged the gloom of the catacombs for the light and richness of the basilicas, the gratitude and faith of Christians found expression in a new development of ritual. Local uses had their beginning. The great liturgical families came into being. The course of centuries added to the profusion of liturgical developments, until in the sixteenth century variety had produced confusion, and the need of retrenchment and unification was felt. Under the direction of St. Pius V., and in the spirit of the Council of Trent, much was done to remodel liturgical prayer—both the Breviary and Missal services being reviewed and in part recast. The latest event in the history of liturgical prayer took place when Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII. named a commission to revise the historical elements of the Breviary.

Now that the history of liturgical prayer has led us to modern times and to its condition at the present, we may pass on to a short review of its characteristics. At the risk of being tedious, yet with the wish to be clear, we will

consider Liturgy as Literature, Theology, and Devotion.

It has sometimes been maintained, with a show of truth, that Literature as such was first developed in a liturgical connection. Certainly, if Literature is the expression of the emotions restrained and refined by good taste, it is easy to see how ritual, dealing with the noblest emotions and controlled by an educated class with a tradition of scholarship and refinement, would stimulate and strengthen the first tottering steps of Literature. It is no common praise of human nature that the first and highest literary flights of almost every race of men have been offered up as worship to the Most High. Nor has this common need of literary expression in liturgical actions taken everywhere the same literary form. Races and kingdoms have nowhere displayed their individuality more than in their forms of worship. We might compare this preservation of individuality in worship to a striking feature of mediæval architecture. Students of the Gothic style can-

not fail to perceive that though throughout the length and breadth of Europe, a definite style of architecture prevailed, nevertheless every kingdom, and sometimes every county, had its own variations from the common ideal. These were often determined by the evolutions of a local school, or by the character of the materials, or otherwise. But the variations are so marked that to erect a church like that of Boston in a Western county would be as great an anomaly as to set up St. Mary Redcliffe's side by side with the superb lantern of St. Nicholas, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Obeying this same law of local variations, liturgical literature has not merely a dominant character expressive of its essential nature, but each locality impresses its ideal through the medium of its own traditional thought-forms. Here in the West the liturgy has made use of the Latin language, not indeed in its purely classical form; but a language of its own, taken in the first place, like all great languages, from the tongues of the common people, and consecrated to the God of Wisdom

and of Love. This Church-Latin or Scholastic-Latin is well worthy of our admiration, and indeed of our study. Ozanam has put its merits in a few characteristic words: "And thus was formed Church-Latin—that strange tongue at once old and new, often sublime in its strength, yet possessing grace, beauty, and great writers of its own—rich enough for all the needs of liturgy, scholasticism, canon and feudal law—homely enough for commerce, for teaching, for the education of the barbarians—and fertile enough to bring forth the whole modern family of neo-Latin languages."[1] Indeed, it may well be asked if language has ever been seen to better advantage than in this same Latin which was consecrated by the Old Itala translation of the New Testament. Not even the Greek of Plato and Aristotle serves the human mind so well as the language of Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. If men are still searching for a common tongue which will serve as a medium and perhaps as a peace-

[1] *Œuvres*, tom. ii., Leçon 16, p. 150.

maker between modern philosophers, there is much to recommend the language which moulded European thought for more than a thousand years. This same language in the liturgical offices of the Western churches has not only been employed in many ranges of purely literary form, but some of them it has created, and those not the least worthy of remark. The subtle assonance of rhyme, so consonant with certain emotions of the soul, is the gift of Church-Latin. It may be questioned whether the whole quality of feeling or pathos is not due to the same great language. No useless endeavour to depose the classical writers from the spheres where they have a right to reign leads us to remark that just as Herodotus and Livy must yield to Luke and John in the sphere of history, so must Homer and Virgil yield to the writers of the *Dies Irae* and the *Stabat Mater*. Between the classical and the Christian writers, what an abyss! But it is the abyss bridged over by the pathetic *κατάβασις* of the Eternal Word. Homer and Virgil have often used their

pens to paint the liturgy of Death. That they could not rise to the sublime emotions of the Christian Death-ode is not the fault of their magnificent gifts of song, but the misfortune of their times. Since their age the world has welcomed Him "qui scientiam habet vocis." With the birth, life, death of our Blessed Lord, true God and Man, an opening has been made in literature for that blending of contrasted feelings of sorrow, tenderness, and reverence which are the soul of pathetic poetry, and indeed of literature. The simple gospel story of Bethlehem, of Calvary, of Emmaus are amongst the richest strains in art. They are the ideals of simple pathos. Notable examples of this same literary manner are found throughout the Church's Liturgy. The *Stabat Mater*, the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, the *Adoro Te Devote*, with its unequalled tenderness and manly reserve, are not poems we may read so much as prayers we may say, and lessons we may meditate. "Dulcis hospes animæ" stands perhaps alone as a definition of Divine grace.

"Plagas sicut Thomas non intueor
Deum tamen meum nunc confiteor"

puts into words the hidden, spontaneous murmurs of the soul in face of the stupendous condescension of the Blessed Sacrament.

It may be remarked that Christian Liturgy by adopting the whole heritage of Hebrew and Greek poetry in its psalms and hymns has taken over the best principles of Lyric, Epic, and Dramatic poetry. To our way of thinking, no classical dramatist has ever attained the effect produced year by year in our churches by the wonderful liturgy of the "Great Week." Most modern literatures owe their birth in great part to this liturgy of the Church. But of all countries England, perhaps, is under the greatest debt to that common parent of so many European tongues. The Book of Common Prayer owes its influence and its beauty to its more or less faithful translation of the Breviary and Missal. The Authorised Version, so long the well of English undefiled, owes the best part of its grace and strength to that storehouse of sublime ideas

and simple phraseology, the Church of God, from which have sprung not merely the Books of the New Testament but the liturgical services of that Testament.

It is almost needless to point out in how many ways the liturgical prayer of the Church is not merely Literature but Theology. Assuredly the Church does not trust her children's future merely to culture. Belles-lettres will not bind up the wounds of sin; nor will the key of knowledge open the gates of Heaven. The literature of the church's services rests on substance rather than on style. Her prayers are not merely stimulated by faith, but charged with it. She sets little store by prayers that misrepresent the mysteries of our religion. No display of fervour, no sudden vogue will betray her into an approval of undogmatic devotions. There is no age when she is not called upon to safeguard her simple-hearted children from the ravages of fantastic, extravagant, and unorthodox devotions. Though she does not forbid new ways of putting old truths, she has

a dread of novelties. Thus she keeps intact the sanctity of the Litany of the Saints, to which she now adds no new name. The structure of the Breviary has remained essentially the same for a thousand years.

Yet she does not merely defend her children. She does not neglect to feed them. Undogmatic and unorthodox prayers she counteracts by those which are full of the mysteries of theology. We may exemplify this in the prayer we often say upon our beads: "O God, Whose only-begotten Son by His Life, Death, and Resurrection has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech Thee, that meditating upon these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, Through the same Christ Our Lord." It is evident that this prayer is the work of a writer who not only knows the resources of language, but who knows the dogmas of the faith. He is not merely a writer, but a theologian. Notice in the first place how the prayer

is addressed to God the Father. There is a brief mention of the Incarnation, which has been to us the means of purchasing the *premia vitæ æternæ.* The writer here contrives to insert a clear memento of the doctrine of Grace, Merit, and Reward. Next he reminds the faithful that the Rosary is a skilful method of meditation suited to the minds of all, and indeed winning the Church's indulgences only in so far as it is accompanied by meditation. He then goes on to name the events of Our Blessed Lord's Life, Death, and Resurrection as mysteries, *i.e.* supernatural truths, as indeed they are, in spite of their natural and historical appearance. Our Blessed Lady is not forgotten. Lady and Queen that she is, he presents her with a garland of roses, using the one metaphorical name of the prayer in her honour.

Lastly, true theologian and priest that he is, alive to the many ill-uses to which even the holiest things may be put, he gently yet plainly warns his readers that the Rosary is not a charm—that it does not act *ex opere operato*—

that it has no inner power to obtain grace, and especially to obtain the grace of graces, final perseverance, whereby we enter into the everlasting boons. We are bluntly reminded that we obtain the mystic *promissiones Christi* only by a faithful following of Christ, as if to say, "Do as Christ bids, and you will receive what Christ promises." This is an example of the theological richness of the Church's liturgy. All her various offices in the Breviary and Missal are no less fitted to stimulate our meditation. But there is one office, written by the Prince of theologians, which, by common consent remains as an ideal of deep and yet simple theological prayer. The office of Corpus Christi needs no praise. The simple find it easy to be understood. Scholars rank it amongst the best examples of poetry. Theologians marvel at the depth of its mysteries. One stanza of the beautiful hymn, *Verbum Supernum prodiens* is often quoted as a model of Church poetry—

> "Se nascens dedit socium,
> Convescens in edulium,
> Se moriens in pretium,
> Se regnans dat in premium,"

which we may give in the worthy English translation of another theologian,[1]

> "Our fellow in the manger lying,
> Our food within the banquet room,
> Our ransom in His hour of dying,
> Our pledge in His own kingly home."[2]

These four titles of Our Blessed Lord are a world of theology. The great architect of Westminster Cathedral, so full of noble thoughts, never came nearer the sublime than when he arranged that the four giant cupolas spanning the vast interior of his masterpiece from narthex to choir should be covered with mosaics depicting in everlasting colour these four verses, first penned by St. Thomas in honour of Our Blessed Lord.

The devotional side of liturgy merits a fuller treatment than we have time to give. We must begin by reminding ourselves that devotion, so nearly allied to emotion, and indeed so identical with the highest forms thereof, is widely parted from mere emotionalism and mere sentimen-

[1] J. D. Aylward, O.P.

[2] *Annus Sanctus*, by Orby Shipley. This little book ought to be more widely known. As a collection of Church hymns it has no superior and few rivals.

talism. Devotion is the fervour of love; the readiness of heart to obey God; the inclination of man's will to follow the divine will. And though nothing brings such a sense of peace as the unspoken Euge with which God ever rewards our ready heart, yet we must follow the Church in not confusing this peace of conscience with the thrill of less spiritual emotions. The Church's prayers, and especially the psalms, are examples of this true spirit of devotion. Never does the Church allow mere excitement or sentiment to find an outlet through her prayers.

It has often been said that we have lost the art of hymn-writing, and that most of our modern hymns are too subjective and emotional to be suited for putting into words the thoughts and wishes of the millions of men and women who use them. It may be so; but whether it is so or not, I leave to others to judge. It would at least be well for our hymn-writers to study the masterpieces of the Church, as men study the churches of past ages of faith before venturing to imitate them. No doubt the common

level of literary taste is sinking. Cheap literature is destroying literature — or rather, true literature cannot be cheap. Everything is manufactured now, except good taste, which is for the most part a matter of restraint and reserve. St. Thomas has laid down the canons of taste as applied to devotion in the famous stanza—

> "Sit laus plena, sit sonora,
> Sit jucunda, sit decora,
> Mentis jubilatio,"

which we may give in an English translation by the writer we have already named—

> "Then be the anthem clear and strong,
> Thy fullest note, thy clearest song,
> The very music of the breast."

When in our over-sensitiveness of soul we allow much of our modern prayer and hymn-writing to jar us by its neglect of these simple canons of taste and by its confusion of emotion with devotion, we must still the jangling notes in our soul by a few quiet moments with the psalms or hymns of one or other of the Church's liturgical offices.

VII

THE PRAYER OF CHRIST

St. Luke, the special Evangelist of Our Blessed Lord's priesthood and prayer, relates that on a certain day His Divine Master "was in a certain place praying," and "when He ceased one of His disciples said to Him, "'Lord, teach us to pray'" (Luke xi. 1). His little band of followers had come upon Him perhaps at daybreak after one of those long night watches that spurred rather than curbed the fervour of His soul. And His prayer seemed in its mysterious and profound self-abasement so far beyond them that the secret of it appeared to them to be something which He alone could teach. Somewhat in the same way we may have found that whereas the many words we have hitherto heard on prayer have left us unmoved, the thought of Our Blessed Lord's

mysterious communion with His Heavenly Father may move us to make our own that child-like cry of the Apostles, "Lord, teach us to pray." Moreover, such is the difficulty of dealing with the subject of Christ's prayer that unless he who is called upon to speak looked beyond and above himself for light he could but shrink from the task as above his strength. Only under the sure guidance of divine teaching can the preacher dare unveil the mysteries and impart the lessons that lie hidden in the communion of the soul of Christ with His Heavenly Father. In what we are about to say, our own words shall be as few as may be. Our whole aim will be to set down with what order and clearness we can, all that is taught us of Our Blessed Lord's prayer by the Gospels and by Theology; nor shall we overlook anything that should be spoken by confining ourselves almost wholly to St. Luke amongst the Evangelists, and to St. Thomas amongst theologians.

The Gospel of St. Luke, like the same writer's

Acts of the Apostles, opens with scenes that lead the reader straightway into an atmosphere of prayer. With Hellenic grace the Evangelist begins the story of Jesus Christ in the Temple of Jerusalem, where Zachary, a priest, is about to offer incense and prayer. Outside, "the multitude of the people were praying." And God, Who loves to yield to a people's prayer, sent down that day the first glad tidings of the herald of the Great King.

To St. Luke, also, we are indebted for the story of the Presentation, when Mary brought her male child to the Temple, and a greater than Zachary offered up His mute child-prayers to His Heavenly Father. Again, it is the same Evangelist who recalls the yearly paschal pilgrimage to the Holy City, together with what befell the parents of Jesus when He stayed behind in the Temple on His Father's business. All these brief descriptions serve St. Luke to introduce the priesthood and the sacerdotal prayer of the God made Man.

Now, though the mentions of Christ's prayer

are not very numerous, even from the pen of St. Luke, it is astonishing how much is conveyed by them. To bring this home to our mind we will arrange what we have to say under certain headings. Thus Our Blessed Lord used *mental* prayer as the very breath of His human soul. No special mention is made of this form of prayer, probably for the reason that He followed His own command of "praying always." With us, continuity of prayer is insured by our good intention. Even as we cannot explicitly love God in every act of our daily lives, neither can we explicitly pray at all times. It is only from time to time that we can raise our minds to God, thanking Him for the moments or hours that have sped, and offering up the moments, hours, or years that still remain to us. Our Blessed Lord suffered no interruption to His continuous prayer. His mind always saw the face of His Father, and the inward conversation of His soul was of and in Heaven. There were times, no doubt, of special dedication to mental prayer. The long

watches of the night were no doubt given over to this exercise. But at all times His soul was raised on high in a region of divine things, where, to use the striking saying of St. Augustine, "He took counsel of the eternal ideas." *Bodily prayer* was only less common with Him, and He has given us an example of almost every kind. Like another Moses He stretched out His *arms* on the cross—a form of bodily prayer that still finds a place in Holy Mass and in the private devotions of the faithful. Nor were His *eyes* without their part in His bodily prayer. Before multiplying the five loaves and two fishes He looked up to Heaven and blessed them.[1] So, too, before raising Lazarus to life.[2] Again, before the last solemn prayer in the supper-room St. John notes that Our Blessed Lord, "lifting up His eyes to Heaven . . . said 'Father.'"[3] Twice were these same eyes wet with His tears—when He wept over the doomed city and when He joined His own tears with those of Magdalene for His dead friend Lazarus.

[1] Luke ix. 16. [2] John xi. 41. [3] John xvii. 1.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews even dares to speak of Our Blessed Lord as One "Who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to Him Who was able to save Him, was heard for His reverence."[1] Again, we find mention made even of the *posture* He took up in prayer. In His last mysterious prayer in the Garden of Olives St. Luke remarks that He knelt down,[2] and St. Matthew adds the touching fact that He "fell upon His face."[3] *Vocal* prayer was freely used by Our Lord, especially in the supper-room, when He performed His high-priestly function of making intercession for men. Nor must we forget the *liturgical* hymn which brought the Last Supper to a close.[4] Again, on the Cross He makes use of vocal prayer. Here, too, He seems to have employed a portion of the Jewish Ritual—the twenty-first psalm, "O God, My God . . . why hast Thou forsaken Me." It is not unlikely

[1] Heb. v. 7.
[2] Luke xxii. 41.
[3] Matt. xxvi. 39.
[4] Matt. xxvi. 30.

that He had often chanted it in the synagogue of Nazareth. Its presence on His lips in the last moments of His life has given a consecration to the Psalter which will never wane.

As to the *places of prayer*, Our Blessed Lord seems to have made use of prayer in all places. God is everywhere, and may be spoken to always and in all places. Still, there were certain spots which He singled out for His own private communings with His Heavenly Father. Doubtless the village synagogue of Nazareth often witnessed His presence within its walls; the Temple of Jerusalem seems to have been haunted by Him. But as if to give us an example of retirement, three places are noted as serving Him for prayer—the *desert*, the *mountains*, and the *garden*. Whenever His apostolic journeys brought Him within reach of the desert He seems to have envied its solitude. Thus immediately after His Baptism the Holy Spirit led Him into the desert.[1] Again, St. Luke notes that He "retired into the desert and prayed."[2] Again, "He went out into a *mountain*

[1] Matt. iv. 1. [2] Luke v. 16.

to pray, and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God."[1] The sacred humanity felt the fascination of the "everlasting hills." Both in the endless sand of the desert and in the giant masses of the mountain rock His soul saw the most perfect material images of the Infinite. Failing desert and mountain He sought out the solitude of the olive garden. When engaged in daily dispute with the Jews in Jerusalem, each evening saw Him pass outside the city walls and into the deep shadows of the olive grove. Later on those same shadows were destined to veil the depths of His mysterious agony, when like Jacob He wrestled with unseen forces in the gloom of night. When the struggle came, it did not find Him unprepared. Night after night He had prayed under the self-same trees and upon the self-same stones that were to witness His last wrestling; as a general exercises his men on the plains where the battle will at length be fought. These nightly watches were kept for the most part alone. Only on the last night did He ask His chosen three to bear Him company.

[1] Luke vi. 12.

The prayer of *wonderment* could not find great place in a soul always flooded with the beatific vision. *Praise* came more naturally from Him. Yet we have an example of the prayer of wonderment and praise in His words, "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones."[1] *Thanksgiving* was still oftener on His lips, as when He blessed the loaves and fishes,[2] when He prayed over the tomb of Lazarus,[3] and lastly, when He consecrated His Sacred Body and Blood.[4] The prayer of petition was most often heard from Him; and it is instructive to note what were the *objects* He sought of His Father. We do not know what was in His thoughts after Baptism when His prayer was answered by the opening of Heaven and the miraculous voice, nor do we know what formed the burden of His petitions throughout His many nightly watches. If we are to take His last night's prayer as a token, He must have passed most of His time in fervent

[1] Luke x. 21. [2] Luke ix. 16. [3] John x. 41. [4] Luke xxii. 19.

acts of conformity to the will of His Heavenly Father. Once He asked His disciples to pray that labourers might be sent into His harvest;[1] nor is it unlikely that this was a dominant object of prayer with Him. He prayed that St. Peter's faith should not fail, and that the converted head of the Apostles should strengthen his fellow Apostles. It is touching to note how His last prayer was that His Father might forgive those who were putting Him to death. His prayer was a striking commentary on the words He had spoken at the outset of His sacred ministry. "Pray for them that persecute and calumniate you."[2] The long quasi-liturgical prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel is a petition for the glorification of His natural and of His mystical Body. It is instructive and indeed consoling to us to note that under the stress of His great grief of soul in the Garden every other form of prayer seems to have given place to a short fervent *aspiration*. But few as His words are they sound the keynote of

[1] Luke ix. 29. [2] Matt. v. 44.

loyalty to God's will—the very soul of prayer. We must not fail to call attention to Our Blessed Lord's supernatural and *ecstatic prayer* on the Hill of Transfiguration. Mystical Theology there finds its highest justification. It is noteworthy that the event was well witnessed so that St. Peter could appeal to it in his Second Epistle. We cannot fail to be struck with the *success* that always awaited upon Our Blessed Lord's prayer. As a result of the first prayer mentioned in the Gospels, "heaven was opened."[1] His prayer for St. Peter, though seemingly fruitless at the moment, has been fully answered in every crisis of the Church's history. So, too, the prayer He offered up for the glorification of His natural and mystical Body, destined to a like seeming unsuccess, has been rewarded with a like answer. His Sacred Body has risen from the thraldom of the tomb; and notwithstanding the many efforts of "the gates of hell" the Church is still standing more widespread and more glorious than ever.

Hitherto we have dealt with Our Blessed

[1] Luke iii. 21.

Lord's prayer on earth. But though His earthly life has come to an end, His priestly prayer has not come to an end; nor, indeed, has it suffered any lessening. "He hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby He is able to save for ever them that come to Him; *always living to make intercession for us.*"[1] . . . "For Jesus is . . . entered . . . into Heaven itself that he may appear now in the presence of God for us."[2] This ever-living intercession is not merely a mental, but a bodily prayer. Christ our Lord has risen and now sits at the right hand of the Heavenly Father, shining with His five wounds. Nor are these marks left upon His body merely as tokens of His victory. They are silent yet eloquent prayers of intercession for men. Throughout eternity they hold up to the gaze of God the Father the bitter death of His Son. The Church deeply feels the truth of this, and every prayer she offers up to God is joined with the mediatorship and intercession of Jesus Christ.

We may now pass from Scripture to Theology,

[1] Heb. vii. 24–25. [2] Heb. ix. 24.

changing the consoling thought of the nature and kinds of Our Blessed Lord's prayer to the more perplexing difficulties to which it gives rise.

Early in the course of these Conferences we came in touch with the profound mysteries which were called up by the doctrine of prayer. We did not presume to give a perfect answer to them, though we reassured ourselves by remembering that there was an answer. We felt that nothing was more mysterious than the freewill of man, except the freewill of God; and that the relations of these two were the mysterious not merely doubled, but raised to the second power. We might have added for our comfort that the difficulty was lessened by the presence of one purely created individuality in the relation, and that it reached its full tide of perplexity when one factor in the relationship was the infinite personality of Jesus Christ. Freewill, with all its attendant difficulties, is hard enough to prove or even to approve in the case of a simple human being. But its difficulties deepen,

its possibility becomes to human thought more intangible or less intelligible, its light wanes and its shadows darken when it is a question of the freewill of God made man. There is a truth hidden in the paradox that Revealed Religion answers the difficulties of Natural Religion by increasing them. The Trinity is the solution of Theism. The Incarnation and Transubstantion are the solution of theistic metaphysics. The freedom of an omniscient God made man is the foundation of Ethics. The immortality of the finite rests upon the mortality of the Infinite. The same law obtains here in the subject of Prayer. We are not concerned to know how revealed religion not only increases but answers all difficulties. For the moment we shall rest content to trace out the working of this law in the case of Our Blessed Lord's prayer. One remark we may, as an unrepentant follower of Scholasticism, be allowed to make. It is rare to find any objection against faith which has not been set down and met by our mediæval philosophers, especially St. Thomas.

Sometimes the objections are put by St. Thomas with such force that an answer seems impossible. Some of our modern opponents of revealed religion have been known to be students of the Summa, and it has been shrewdly suspected that the vigour of their attacks on dogma lost nothing by their acquaintance with the *Videtur quods* of the Angel of the Schools.

St. Thomas deals with the prayer of Christ in a masterly Question of the Tertia Pars.[1] We are concerned chiefly with the first article, which inquires into the fittingness of Christ's prayer. As usual the objections urged against the true doctrine are fundamental and complete, being taken from the doctrine of Christ's (1) omnipotence, (2) omniscience, (3) blessedness. It is evident that St. Thomas has the prayer of petition chiefly in view, as it is this form of prayer which bears the brunt of the difficulties. The solution of these difficulties is the severest test of the orthodoxy of any view of the Incarnation. For if we begin by admitting that Christ

[1] 3ª, Qu. 21, Art. 1.

was God not merely in name but in deed, that is, in power, knowledge, and blessedness, there would seem no need or possibility of prayer. And, on the other hand, if we begin by admitting that Christ stood in need of prayer, it would seem necessary to deny His divine power, knowledge, blessedness, and consequently His Divinity. Nor in our own times, and amongst learned and good men, are there wanting examples of those who face the mysteries of the Incarnation only to be drawn into a virtual denial of the saving dogma, "Jesus Christ is true God and true man." Orthodox belief holds the two doctrines that Christ is God and that Christ really prayed. If these two doctrines give rise to difficulties which human reasonings cannot fully meet, it does not follow that the difficulties cannot be met. God has thought fit to reveal mysteries without revealing the reason and the justification of them. Yet we may go a good way towards showing that however formidable the difficulties appear, they are not necessarily subversive of the true faith; nor

need they be the *de jure*, though they may be the *de facto*, causes of unbelief.

To apply this to the argument from the omnipotence of Christ. It cannot be denied that at first sight it would appear self-contradictory to maintain that omnipotence has any need to pray. Where the will is all-powerful there can be no obligation to borrow from another will. All this is true enough. Yet it is obvious that the duality of Christ's nature alters the question. The Incarnation is not to be looked upon as a transubstantiation of what is human into what is divine. The advent of the uncreated personality of Jesus Christ to the created human nature has changed nothing, or at least has transubstantiated nothing. It has added the divine Person, but it has either not divinised the human nature at all or not to the extent of destroying its humanity. The natural limitations of our being still remain; indeed some even of the defects wrought by man's fall are freely assumed as the materials of suffering and redemption. But the created human will of Christ is not

omnipotent. And though it may or not be true, for example, that the Sacred Heart is the organ of a love that is divine,[1] it would seem absolutely certain that the Sacred Heart cannot be the organ of THE divine love. Christ as God is omnipotent; not Christ as man; and it is Christ as man we look to in the question of Christ's prayer. Yet St. Thomas seems to suggest that the God made man, *i.e.* the divine Person prayed to His heavenly Father, first for our example, and secondly to emphasise His distinction from the Father. Hence Our Blessed Lord almost always begins His prayer, as He taught us to begin our prayer, with a recognition of "Our Father." If it is theologically true that the Son has the Divine Nature from the Father, there may well be some acknowledgment sufficient to constitute prayer in a true yet divine sense.

The difficulty from the will of Christ gives place to the difficulty from the practical omniscience of Christ's intellect. For as it is superfluous to pray for what we know will occur, so is

[4] "Operationes sunt suppositorum."

it useless to pray for what we know will not occur. Now the mind of Christ knew the future, with all its varied fortunes and events. So that either He knew the future and prayer became superfluous or useless; or He did not know the future, and His Godhead is a mere assertion. At first sight it would seem that this difficulty which we frankly faced in our Conference on the Theology of Prayer, is increased in the case of Christ. We have already argued against the difficulty that because God foreknew all coming events it was superfluous to pray for them. Now we have to add the apparently more complicating factor of foreknowledge in the one who offers up the prayer. But in truth the difficulty is left unchanged. St. Thomas simply replies that if the mind of Christ saw that events were to be, it likewise saw that one of the disposing causes was His own prayer; and hence he prayed just as a child does not refuse to ask and thank its parents for the food and clothing which it knows will be given in due time. And, indeed, if the essence of prayer is the felt and acknowledged

dependence of secondary cause on the First Cause, the prayer of petition is that knowledge and acknowledgment as it precedes the event; whilst the prayer of thanksgiving is that knowledge and acknowledgment as it follows upon the event. We may then conclude that where the knowledge and acknowledgement are most complete and full the prayer is best and most fervent. So that it may be a truth if not a truism to say that Our Blessed Lord's prayer was the best and most fervent of all prayers, because He saw clearly how things would fall out through His praying, and, moreover, he acknowledged that in coming to pass they would depend not merely on their immediate and secondary causes, of which His Prayer was one, but upon the Fiat and influx of the First Cause. Hence it may be no paradox to say that Our Blessed Lord's prayer was fervent, not in spite of His foreknowledge, but because of it. All this may sound abstract and speculative. We confess it. But we would urge that the objection is purely speculative also. The spectre of foreknowledge is a

mere *idola specus* a shadow of the pure intellect, a dream-difficulty, which the practical reason and, above all, the will may and must break through. The answers given by the speculative reason to its own shadows are not always satisfactory. Yet did we value them at their true worth we should find them not without value. Even at their lowest they suffice to remind the understanding that its apparent difficulties are shadows, such as all truth, and especially the highest truth, must cast upon a faculty which can stand under only one side of a truth at a time.

One further difficulty remains to be faced. It is urged that Christ Our Lord could not pray seeing that prayer is the voice of Hope; and He who had the Beatific Vision could not hope for what He held. It is theologically true that when the soul is *in termino* the provisional and tutelary virtues of faith and hope, no longer finding their subject-matter, die out of the soul. Sight destroys Faith, possession puts an end to Hope. Thus the Beatific Vision which was the constant

possession of the soul of Christ was incompatible with hope, and, as it would seem at first sight, with prayer. In reply it may be remarked that the Beatific Vision far from being incompatible with prayer, is a union of God and the soul which is the very atmosphere of prayer. And though Our Blessed Lord had the Beatific Vision in His soul, He had not yet the full effects of it in His Body. For the immortality and glorification of His Sacred Body He could still hope and He could still pray. It is worth remarking that after His resurrection and consequent glorification of His Body the Sacred Scriptures give no instances of His prayer. We are not thereby to suppose that the possibility of prayer has ceased. Yet the silence of the Evangelists is at least remarkable, in view of the fact that after the glorification of His natural Body, there still remains the glorification of His mystical Body, the Church. That He still intercedes for those to whom He is joined as Head we are assured by the author of the

Epistle to the Hebrews. And it may well be that this continuous prayer of petition which the soul of Christ still finds occasion to offer up may find an outlet, so to say, through the Blessed Sacrament. If it be allowable to think that the graces of a neighbourhood are mysteriously and really connected with the Emmanuel, the "God with us" of that neighbourhood, it may not be too daring to think that the needs of the Spouse of Christ in that neighbourhood find themselves recommended to the Father through the same Real Presence. And thus it may be that Our Blessed Lord intercedes for the glorification of His mystical Body from a state in which His sacramental Body still bears the limitations, not indeed of Incarnation, but of Transubstantiation.

These are, perhaps, subtle thoughts, and we would rather touch the heart with fervour than the mind with logic. It may have struck you again and again in listening to this subject of Our Blessed Lord's prayer that we have continued to speak about the most pathetic

and deepest of topics with all the unemotionalism of a philosophical treatise. The greater part of this must be laid to the unskilled hands of him whose responsibility it is to speak to you. But part must be laid down to deliberate intent. The prayer of Christ, especially as it is painted to us by the pen of St. Luke, has only to be thought about to spring up into streams of manly devotion. Some find in the story of the Crucifixion the most touching moments of Christ's life. But there are others to whom Our Blessed Lord's drawing power makes the strongest appeals from the gloom and the collapse of the Olive Garden. Others can never read without a thrill how Our Blessed Lord "went into a mountain to pray, and passed the whole night *in the prayer of God.*" It is enough for the preacher to direct your eyes to the kneeling figure—to remind you Who He is, whence and why He came—and what He does. Then the preacher may leave you to your thoughts and to your emotions, which, if you will not keep them back, will be amongst the deepest and strongest of manly souls.

VIII

HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

THOUGH we could not wholly avoid a somewhat abstract treatment of the subject of these Conferences, we should not reach the end we aimed at were we to be wholly abstract. Even in what we have hitherto seemed to discuss only in a speculative way, much we hope has been conveyed or, at least, suggested of a practical nature. Not a little remains and must still remain to be said. Yet we would add some words of practical advice in this last Conference by devoting it wholly to the subject of Hindrances to Prayer, which we will take to be covered by Distractions and Pride.

To realise the true character of the relations in which distractions and pride stand to prayer, we must first know the effects of prayer Theology informs us that these effects are four,

viz. merit, impetration, satisfaction, pleasure.[1] For the first three intention and not attention is necessary; for the last attention must be added to intention. It does not require much thought to make this clear to us. Merit is an increase of grace resulting from an exercise of charity. Where there is not even an implicit *intention* of doing our actions through love of God there can be no merit. Impetration is the power of obtaining what we ask. Though this does not always require charity, it always requires an *intention* of seeking our favour from God. So, too, satisfaction or the power of blotting out temporal punishment which is attached to the afflictive or penitential aspect of prayer, can only be brought about by the *intention* of bearing pain for the love of God. In all these cases it is evident that actual attention is not necessary. Whilst the initial intention lasts, or in other words, whilst the initial intention is unrecalled, our prayers are

[1] "Delectatio": a scholastic word difficult to translate. It might be rendered as "spiritual joy."

meritorious, impetratory, and satisfactory. But if we wish prayer to be a pleasure we must pay attention to what we are saying. Intention is an act of the will whereby we refer our action to God. Attention is an act of the mind whereby we make ourselves vividly conscious of the objects of sensation or thought. It is at once evident that of the two, intention is much more important than attention, though this is not always recognised. It is a common characteristic of heresy to lay more stress on attention and the outward decorum of vocal prayer than on the inward intention which gives it birth. Yet because we remark this we must not be taken to discredit attention, which to some modern psychologists seems the essential act of human intelligence. It is worth noting that they also detect in it a certain influx of the will which directs the mind to one object rather than to others. This affective element in attention allies it with prayer. Theologians are responsible for a very useful division of attention. With St. Thomas they

note that whilst praying we may attend to the words we say—or to the meaning of the words we say—or to the "end" of the words we say, *i.e.* to God. To attend to God in prayer, even if the sense of the words is forgotten, is to be fervent in prayer. It is, indeed, good to be busy about the mere mechanical pronunciation of the words—and better to attend to their meaning—but best of all to unite our minds with God Who is the goal of all prayer. This is the wise teaching of St. Thomas and should hinder us from judging ourselves to have prayed ill, merely because we have overlooked the perfect enunciation of words in the fervour of our union with God. It is notorious that vocal prayers are sometimes, if not often, said with slovenliness in Catholic congregations. Without wishing altogether to excuse what is not altogether excusable, I would suggest that part of the seeming slovenliness may be due to the stress laid upon the higher kind of attention.

But where there is no attention even of the

lowest and most mechanical kind there can be little or no pleasure in prayer. Distractions kill the joy of praying. Few mental pains exceed that of being obliged to repeat words which are repugnant to the ideas we wish to keep in consciousness. For example, to be forced to read light literature in a time of deep grief is agony of soul. If the soul is teased with pleasing distractions—and our distractions are very nearly related to our pleasures—the recitation of a prayer can be extremely burdensome. But attention soon begets pleasure. Even in spiritual matters the proverb "Age quod agis" is the secret of successful prayer, because the secret of joyful prayer. In common vocal prayer it is wonderful how much joy can be found in attention to the right saying or chaunting of the common psalm or hymn. I daresay we have all experienced a thrill of pleasure in taking part in a united singing, say, of the *Veni Creator Spiritus* or of the *Te Deum* — or even of the simple Litany we sing here in our little chapel at Benediction. But it is a pleasure attendant

only on attention. Distractions many banish it in a moment. To those of us who have been present or who have taken part in a great function of the Church, say, an ordination, the meaning not merely of the many vocal prayers, but of the bodily prayers, the bowings, genuflexions, and the rest, affords one of the keenest of spiritual pleasures. Especially is this the case if by God's grace we are able to raise our mind beyond that which is outward and feast our eye on another throne-room and on another heavenly ceremonial.

It is hardly necessary to say what distractions are; most of us, I daresay, have something more than an academic acquaintance with them. Distractions are thoughts which may or may not be permissible at other times, but are not permissible during prayer. The chief injury they do is to withdraw the attention of the mind from the words—or from the meaning of the words—or from the thought of God. They need not be bad nor even idle thoughts. At other times and in other circumstances to think of them may be

a duty. But it is wrong to allow them to fill the time of prayer. They must be kept like catechumens in the approaches of our soul and not allowed into the Holy of Holies. They arise chiefly from our occupation or our affections. Let a man tell his distractions, and he has laid bare his affections. Where a man's treasure is there is his heart. There is a curious visual phenomenon known as "after-images." If we look steadily at a brightly coloured object and then either shut our eyes or turn them towards a white surface the coloured object will reappear. Nor will it have its own natural colours; it will be clad in what are called complementary colours. Somewhat in the same way, if our minds are much thrown among engaging or absorbing objects, we cannot suddenly direct our thoughts towards holy things without finding ourselves distracted by a hundred teasing after-images mirrored on the background of our prayers. Blessed Thomas More puts the matter forcibly if a little quaintly: "But when men are wealthy and well at their ease, while our

tongue pattereth upon our prayers apace, good God! how many mad ways our mind wandereth awhile!"[1] And it often happens that the false colours of the after-image are more fascinating than the reality itself. The important matter is to avoid distractions as far as we may be able. Rules for this are easily given; but it is the practice rather than the remembrance of rules that clears the soul of those "dead flies" that "spoil the sweetness of the ointment."[2] It is evident that if our occupations and our affections are the chief source of distractions our first rule will be to control our affections. It is useless to take in hand our distractions in prayer only during the time of prayer. Our greatest hope lies in fighting the enemy beyond our frontiers. If there are any occupations which without being necessary are very distracting, we must manfully put an end to them. It is said of one of our English Vicars-Apostolic, Bishop Walmesly, that he was a devoted student of mathematics. How-

[1] "A Dialogue of Comfort" (London, 1847), ch. xix. p. 68.
Eccles. x. 1.

ever, on finding that his studies painfully distracted him at the altar he gave them up. I need not say that it is the spirit rather than the letter of this example which we suggest to you. Often to those who read much, distractions come from what they need not, or should not, read. It is not unusual to give up certain kinds of reading before examinations lest they should prove too distracting.

In the same way a class of distractions arises from an abnormal absorption, for example, in mere romantic literature. It would be a miracle if there were no distractions awaiting those who spend two or three hours a day in novel-reading and never give half-an-hour to their Bible or their Imitation, or other kinds of spiritual reading. What a man sows he reaps. Let him sow distractions, and he will reap distractions. If, then, we are willingly given up to a course of action which provides a fruitful brood of distracting thoughts, our first rule must be to put an end to the cause. With most of us, however, distractions spring from our

lawful occupations and, indeed, from our duties. To prevent these from oversowing the tares of distractions we must learn, more and more, to be in, yet not of, the world. We must neither add to nor subtract from our round of work; or if add and subtract we must, let us subtract all needless anxiety and only add fervour of intention. The household of St. Jane Frances de Chantal used to say, "Madame's first director made her pray only three times a day, and the whole household was upset. But His Lordship the Bishop of Geneva"—St. Francis of Sales—"makes her pray all day long, and she disturbs no one." She had been taught the lesson that the secret of true prayer is to "serve the Lord." A great step will have been taken when we have learnt to do all under the eye and for the honour of our Master. We shall not do our duty whether of work or of prayer with less heart or with less success because we do it for Him Whose judgment is final and just. Then when the time of prayer comes we

shall be the better able to tie up our anxieties, so to say, at the threshold of our soul. Or if they find an entrance into our prayers, we shall not weary ourselves in useless guerilla warfare with them. We shall quietly renew our intention and make an act of heartfelt humility, thus turning the dart of our enemy into an arrow of fervent prayer. A second rule for avoiding distractions is—by paying attention. If we cannot pay the highest and best kind of attention, let us make use of a lower or of the lowest. Or, if we are distracted whilst employing the lower kind of attention, it may be God's gracious way of suggesting a higher. Never give up the struggle, which will only end with life. But above all, never give up under a sense of depression. Our chief enemy is the imagination. But we should remember that unless our will gives way, the imagination, even if it is a source of annoyance, is not a source of sin; and though it may rob prayer of its sweetness, it need not rob it of its merit, its impetration, and its satisfaction.

More consoling and sensible words I cannot find than those of the great mystic St. Teresa. In speaking of the relief she felt when first taught the difference between the imagination and the understanding, she remarks that many do not grasp the difference; and "hence arise the afflictions of many who are given to prayer (at least this happens to persons who are not learned); hence also arise melancholies and loss of health and a total neglect of prayer, through not considering that there is an interior world. And as we cannot prevent the heavenly bodies from going on in their rapid course, so neither can we stop the wanderings of the imagination." "When I see souls so very careful about being attentive at their prayers, and about understanding them also, so that it seems they dare not so much as stir or divert their thoughts lest they should lose the little pleasure and devotion they feel in their prayer, I then clearly discover how little they understand." "We must remember that the business does not consist in thinking but in loving much; do, there-

fore, whatever may excite you most to love. Perhaps we do not know what love is; it consists not in having greater delights, but greater resolutions and desires of pleasing God in everything and in endeavouring as far as possible not to offend Him, and in beseeching Him that He would promote the honour and glory of His Son and extend the bounds of the Catholic Church. These are signs of love. *Do not imagine that it consists in not thinking on anything else and that all is lost, if you have a few distractions!*" [1]

Distractions are closely connected with the sin of turning to creatures, whereas Pride is essentially the turning away from God. Hence distractions, though common enough with men, are more naturally a besetting fault of the weaker sex, in whom the emotions and the imagination normally reach a higher state of development. Hence though some of the remarks I have made may probably have seemed exaggerated, a spiritual director with

[1] "The Interior Castle" (London, 1859), pp. 76–117.

even a limited experience would no doubt look upon them as justified by feminine psychology. Men are naturally more inclined to keep from prayer through pride than to give it up through distractions. And of the two hindrances to prayer it is evident that pride is the more dangerous and the harder to cure.

We have already seen that the acknowledgment of God's excellence is an essential part of prayer. Pride, far from being the acknowledgment of God's excellence and infinity, is the undue seeking after our own excellence. It is the most formal turning away from God, and when added to other sins it adds to their guilt. If we are to believe St. Thomas, our first parents sinned through pride, not so much in desiring to be like God, as in desiring the divine likeness without the acceptance and the acknowledgment of the divine help. The proud man thinks he can stand alone. Consequently the proud man cannot pray. He does not feel the need of external help. He is sufficient for himself. His pride will often keep him from ignobler sins; it

is a tyrant that cannot brook a division of its autocracy. It can reign equally over good works and evil, because, though it cannot make evil good, it can make good works evil. It is never so dangerous as when it is reigning alone. And as men given over to irrational scepticism can only be convinced by a *demonstratio ad absurdum* or by an *argumentum ad hominem*, so pride can rarely be driven out of a soul until God has allowed it to fall into some lesser but more degrading sin. It is commoner with men than with women, for the reason that men, being naturally the stronger, are naturally drawn to trust in their own strength. It is often noted that women are more devoted church-goers than men, and that as a rule their confessions are less brief and business-like. Men are more tempted to think prayer useless; but when they do pray, they are less likely to be vexed by distractions.

We remarked that distractions are opposed to attention, whereas pride is opposed to intention. To justify this we have only to recall

the fact that intention is the deliberate seeking of means to an end; intention in prayer being the deliberate seeking from God of the means to reach our last end. It is at this that pride strikes. As it glories in its own acquirements and seeks its own end by itself, the whole fabric of prayer appears foolish, or at least childish, to it. It finds it hard to go on its knees. It finds it harder to say "Our Father." It thinks that to be childlike is to be childish. It cannot see the force of Our Blessed Lord's words, "Amen I say to you, whosoever shall not *receive* the Kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it."[1] It does not realise that since the Kingdom of God must be received, it must also be sought. It can do much good. But it cannot acknowledge from Whom the good came, and Who must bless it unto its increase. Pride, in laying the axe to the root of intention, paralyses the possibility of prayer. Distractions suspend some of the more pleasurable functions of prayer, but pride makes prayer an impossi-

[1] Mark x. 15.

bility, because an absurdity. An example of this is painted by no other than Our Blessed Lord Himself, and, as we might expect, it is recorded by St. Luke, the Evangelist of prayer. There is little need to dwell at length on the classical parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. The Pharisee is a type of the proud; the Publican of the humble. It was to be expected that the "prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds."[1] The character of the Pharisee is sketched with great fulness and truth. He could apparently defend himself against the crimes of usury, fraud, and adultery. He was careful about the laws of fasting and alms-deeds. He obeyed the commandments and performed the works of satisfaction. Outwardly he was an exemplary member of the community; but there his goodness ended. He was one of those "whited sepulchres which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness."[2] Pride had corrupted all his good deeds.

[1] Eccles. xxxv. 21. [2] Mark xxiii. 27.

He belonged to those "who trusted in themselves as just and despised others."[1] His pride has merited the fine epigram of the poet—

> "Two went to pray. Or rather say
> One went to brag, th' other to pray.
> One stands up close and treads on high,
> Where th' other dares not send his eye.
> One nearer to God's altar trod;
> The other to the altar's God."

The Pharisee did not altogether forget the duties of his position and what was expected of him. The holy name is invoked. He even "gives thanks" to God for what he is. But he contrives to corrupt these outwardly good things by the loathsome spirit of pride. His thanksgiving is only lip-deep. All the while he is trusting in himself as just. Moreover his words are as unlike a prayer as they could well be. Man is never so contemptible as when he is boasting. A braggart cuts a sorry figure at all times, but especially before the Court of Heaven. Nothing is more painful than to witness the folly of those who think that the heavenly ranks

[1] Luke xviii. 9.

are fixing their eyes with wonder upon them; as if their goodness was drawing from God the words, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth."[1] The Pharisee was one of those who made a show of prayer only as an opportunity of displaying the spiritual wares of his soul and of saying, "I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing," at the same time that God was saying, "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of Me gold fire-tried that thou mayest be made rich, and mayest be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see."[2]

If the Pharisee had only kept to a verse of the penitential psalms he might have prayed to some purpose. But whatever his reasons, he seems to have preferred his own prayer. It may have been composed in more fashionable

[1] Job i. 8. [2] Apoc. iii. 17–18.

Hebrew. But, in truth, he was not a success as a composer. For whilst doing his best to make a prayer, he merely succeeded in making a speech—which is the least successful way of approaching the Infinite. Nothing can be more painful than the accurately drawn figure of this exemplary member of the synagogue standing near the altar making his *virtues* the subject-matter of a speech, then going down self-satisfied that he had made a very creditable show before Jehovah, and little suspecting the true value set upon his boasting by the wise and good God.

The figure of the Publican is drawn with equal skill. He stands out before us as an engaging type of those lowly and self-depreciatory souls who win every one to their side. He is utterly unconscious of all else but his own sin. Though the figure of the braggart blocked the view of the altar, he does not see him, or he does not notice him. The sight of the Pharisee's self-satisfaction was calculated more than anything else to distract him from himself. How often do we hear men say, "I will never set my foot

in church whilst such a one is there;" or, "I am wicked, but I am not a hypocrite." The Publican, sorely tempted as he may have been to mingle comparisons with his prayers, kept undauntedly to himself. The Pharisee compared himself with the Publican, with what success we know. But to the Publican nothing was present but God and his sin—God's mercifulness, capable of saving him, and his misery craving to be saved. His prayer, if not taken from the liturgy of the chosen people, was full of the spirit of true liturgical prayer. He based his hopes, not on the realisation of his own strength, but on his sense of sin and on his own realisation of God's mercy towards sinners. And thus whereas the Pharisee made the longer prayer, the Publican made the better; for he who had wrought many good deeds spoiled them by pride, and he who had wrought many bad deeds blotted them out by humility.

We endeavoured to lay down some simpler rules for the lessening or for the management of our distractions. To provide rules for the

lessening of pride is a harder task. Pride is a vice royal. It aims at reigning in the soul. Nor when once it has set up its throne can it be deposed by anything but its rival virtue, humility. We cannot oust it by any stratagem. It yields only to a direct attack. The one advice worth giving to a proud man is that which he is least likely to welcome. We can but say, "Be humble. God is your Father. Kneel at His feet and own yourself His child." It is not the most reassuring, but it is the only policy towards pride. Nowadays it is safe to say that pride is a besetting sin of the world. Perhaps it has always borne its present supremacy. We cannot tell. But whilst it is useless to make comparisons between the times that are and that have been, it is impossible to close our eyes to the pride that still swells throughout the world. I know not which of the two—whether pride or humility—has the larger following. It is enough to know that the "pride of life" is still a master-vice, indeed a tyrant-vice, reigning over a wide jurisdiction. Our

Father Who is in Heaven is everywhere acknowledged — and denied; adored — and scouted; loved—and ignored. It is not easy to reconcile all this denial of God with the self-denial which is the soul of true humility. Perhaps pride, like the sea, has its ebb and flow, its low and high tide. If this be so, the state of God's interests in the world of to-day is hard to sum up. Pride would seem to be in flood when men in great part have given up prayer; when many "houses of prayer" have come to be looked upon and used as mere meeting-places; when the preacher's pulpit has been degraded to the rostrum of political agitators; when men come to church not to cry mercy to God, but to while away a pleasant hour of the idlest day of the week. Yet this judgment on the world may be as untrue as it is despiriting. It may be truer, as it is more consoling, to think that if pride and forgetfulness of God are at their flood, signs are not wanting that the waters are beginning to subside. When prayer is coming to be looked upon as a duty; when the old liturgical services

of the Church have not merely their apologists but their admirers; when social wounds are acknowledged to be beyond the reach of statistics and legislation; when the Creator is being gradually reinstated as the First Phenomenon and First Cause of Creation, pessimism may well be thought superfluous.

However this may be, it is best for us to look away from the world outside us to the world within. In our lives the years when pride was strongest were those when, not altogether through neglect but more through distaste, the simple duty of standing under the Divine eye morning and evening became a burden. There are few of us perhaps who may be privileged to go through life without days of painful severance and misunderstanding with God, due to the strength and the headstrongness of our will. The severance will last, and the misunderstanding will remain unhealed, until in childlike self-forgetfulness we begin afresh that prayer of the lowly which pierces the clouds and brings down God's strength and peace into our souls. If by

God's mercy the day of estrangement from Him is not yet come, may He keep it ever from us! Whilst we are still in the stress of the struggle with our soul's foes, we hardly know that we stand, and we know not when we may fall. Our souls will be ours only if we watch and pray. And as we know not what nor how to ask, our lifelong prayer must ever be, "Lord, teach us to pray."

THE END

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.
Edinburgh & London

JOHN F. HITCHCOCK

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48366

MCNABB, O. P., VINCENT
AUTHOR

Oxford Conferences on Prayer
TITLE (Michaelmas Term, 1902).

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